

PICTORIAL POETRY

By

Dr. M. M. BHATTACHERJE,
M.A., Ph.D.,

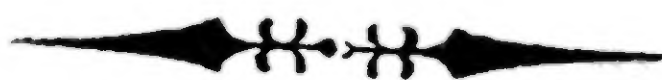
Sir Gooroodass Bannerje Professor
and

Head of the Department of English,
University of Calcutta,

Author of *Platonic Ideas in Spenser, Studies in Spenser,*
'Courtesy' in Shakespeare, Keats and Spenser, etc.,

President

English Society, Calcutta.



PUBLISHED BY :

The Research Bulletin (Arts)
of
The University of the Panjab

RECEIVED BY 


ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY

12514

821.00001
B47-P

CHECKED

MZ

ST 01
RG1

JAMMU & KASHMIR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
No. 12514.
Date...29...6...55.
SRINAGAR

V-82

2001
Structure & Imaginary

Dedicated

TO

The ~~X~~ Panjab University

Printed by Pt. Dev Datta Shastri, at the V. V. R. I. Press,
Sadhu Ashram, Hoshiarpur.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD	...	iii
PREFACE	...	v
Lecture I		
✓ PICTORIAL POETRY ✓	...	I
Lecture II		
✓ CHAUCER ✓	...	18
Lecture III		
✓ SPENSER ✓	...	27
Lecture IV		
✓ KEATS AND TENNYSON ✓	...	47
Lecture V		
ROSSETTI AND MORRIS	...	74
Lecture VI		
SWINBURNE ✓	...	99
Lecture VII		
GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS	...	118
Lecture VIII		
✓ IMPRESSIONISTS, IMAGISTS AND SYMBOLISTS ✓	...	147

FOREWORD

The nucleus of this book was a series of extension lectures which Prof. M. M. Bhattacharje delivered at the Panjab University College, Hoshiarpur in the spring of 1953. He has somewhat enlarged the original lectures and they are here published by the Panjab University.

Prof. M. M. Bhattacharje has brought to bear upon his subject a scholarly and disinterested outlook. The subject, though clearly defined, ranges over a wide field, and his approach shows a considerable knowledge and understanding of the various authors that he has handled. He has attempted to examine his authors minutely but, without losing sight of the broad principles of poetic art, from a standpoint which does equal justice to poets of different schools and ages. He has that detachment which sees the limitations of acknowledged masters like Spenser and Keats without missing their greatness. He can at the same time approach the moderns with understanding and can take a fresh survey of the late nineteenth-century poets whom the moderns themselves neglect.

It is sometimes forgotten that the true purpose for which a University exists is to uphold scholarship for its own sake. Whatever pragmatic considerations may affect the study of English literature, it remains a high branch of learning, and what matters chiefly is not the numbers who study it but the quality of work which they are expected to achieve. Exchange visits from eminent teachers can do much in sustaining this ideal; they keep our outlook fresh, and recall us from narrow local habits of thought to the unity of the idea of learning. It is from this point of view that Prof. M. M. Bhattacharje's visit was valuable to students and teachers of this University both inside and outside the Department of English, and the lectures which we are glad to be able to publish will be read with interest by all students of English Literature.

DIWAN CHAND SHARMA

General Editor,
Research Bulletin (Arts),
Panjab University,
Hoshiarpur.

PREFACE

My work as Professor of English in Calcutta University supplied the basis of the lectures which find a place in the present volume. I must thank the authorities of the Panjab University and especially Prof. D. C. Sharma for having invited me to deliver this course of lectures on English poets. Interest in English literature has certainly declined in recent years, although larger numbers of students have taken to the study of English as a world language. International relations, politics, economics, sociology etc., apart from the physical sciences, are deservedly popular now, and a profitable and fruitful study of these subjects requires some command of English. But English as medium of knowledge is hardly distinguishable from English literature, and an acquaintance with its masterpieces must lead to facility in writing and speaking a language which is the acknowledged vehicle of modern thought and science. It was a matter of satisfaction to me that besides professed students and teachers of English literature, there were others who were attracted to these lectures in the Panjab University College.

I should like to put in a word regarding my approach to poetry in this volume. Aesthetic criticism does not, and should not, have a monopoly in the field of literary appreciation. Form, suggestiveness, unity of impression etc., are not the only merits of literary art. The appeal of poetry to visual imagination, its evocative power based on the sensuous and the colourful, are also important, and I have tried to analyse these in the work of some of the great English poets. It is for the readers to judge how far I have succeeded.

In dedicating my work to the Panjab University, I am reminded of the kindness showered on me by its members when I was in their midst. I wish it were possible for me to repay them. I hope this little book will, in a small measure, serve as a link of friendship between the two sister universities of Bengal and the Panjab.

I have finally to thank Miss. A. G. Stock for the readiness with which she extended a helping-hand to me by making valuable suggestions and reading the proofs.

Calcutta University.
July, 1954.

M. M. BHATTACHERJE.

LECTURE I

Pictorial Poetry

THE expression 'pictorial poetry' may appear to be a contradiction in terms. A picture appeals to the eye, the visual organ, while poetry, like music, appeals in one sense particularly to the ear. In very early times poetry—for example, Homeric poetry—was actually sung to the tune of musical instruments. There was hardly any question of the reading of poetry, for people were mostly illiterate, and books were rare because paper was unknown and palm leaves or things of that sort were not always easily available. Poetry was, therefore, heard either as recitation or as song. Lyric poetry, like the poetry of Sappho, was so called because it was sung to the tune of the lyre. In this context reference may be made to the history of ancient India where the *Vedas* were recited, heard and memorised, but not read. They were called *Srutis*, because the verses were believed to have been originally revealed to mortal ears, but were not reduced to writing in order to be read. What was heard by one was conveyed by him to the ears of others and by these again to their descendants. *Smritis* based on the *Srutis* were commentaries on these. They too were memorised by scholars who transmitted them to their disciples or descendants. Books did not figure in the picture at all.

But the appeal of poetry gradually grew wider in course of time. To the delight of the ear were added other delights. Originally the chief attraction of poetry recited or sung was rhyme, verbal jingle, alliteration and rhythm. These were supplemented by beauty of imagery, of profoundness of thought and of subtlety or suppleness of expression, as enjoyment of poetry became more and more an intellectual pleasure independent of auditory pleasure.* Poetry became more and more the outcome of imagination and ceased to be the

*Even now the value of the music of verse is emphasised by discerning critics. They think there is an essential kinship between the waves of excited feeling or emotion and the rhythmical cadence in words which seek to express it. Song or chant and emotion are as intrinsically allied as word and thought. Says Shairp, "Not of lyrical poetry only, though of it pre-eminently, but of all high poetry, may it be said that it is only fitly uttered when it is chanted, not read; and so it is with a

product of mere dexterity in the permutation and combination of words and sounds. It had, therefore, the effect of stirring the reader's imagination.

The impression of art is, however, indivisible. Hence the chief mark of great art is unity or harmony. This is true also of literary art. Unity of action is insisted on in drama for the sake of unity of impression, which is the most important feature of good poetry too. When people read it, they are moved by something which is incapable of analysis, and are not inclined to be captious critics of its different aspects or its different ingredients. Readers must, of course, distinguish one poet from another and one dramatist from another. The distinction is determined by the special poetic genius or dramatic power of the writer. But each has a unique appeal which cannot be resolved into constituent elements.

Yet we have to take into consideration the different ingredients of drama and of poetry, when we are concerned with literary criticism, *i.e.*, when we judge and discuss, and not merely enjoy, literary work. This illustrates that the appeal of the whole is distinct from the impressions produced by the different parts, and that there is unity in diversity.

From this point of view poetry may be considered with reference to theme or subject-matter and verse-craft to which music contributes a good deal. Devices like rhyme, blank verse, *vers libre*, couplets, quatrains, elaborate stanza-formations, the sonnet-form (Italian or English), the Spenserian stanza etc., have to be included in verse-craft, sometimes called the technical part of poetry. The theme constitutes the contents of verse-craft or poetic art. The pictorial element in poetry is concerned with its theme or subject-matter.

But the supposed duality of theme and poetic expression had led to controversies. Is a dumb poet—'an inglorious Milton'—conceivable? Or, is the suggestion paradoxical and untenable? Wordsworth thinks that the poetic faculty may be 'wanting the accomplishment of verse.' Goethe held the contrary view that there could be no poet without the

chant that most poets have recited their own poetry. As Wordsworth tells us, 'Though the accompaniment of a musical instrument be dispensed with, the true poet does not, therefore, abandon his privilege distinct from that of the mere proseman ;

'He murmurs near the running brooks,
A music sweeter than their own'.

It is a sad divorce that has long been made between poetry and song. We shall never know the full power of Poetry till she has wandered back to her original home, and found there her long-severed sister, Music." (*On Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, p. 20).

gift of poetic expression. "If we are to divide Poetry into essence and expression, the garment of musical words is indeed the more essential of the two -- or rather, that Poetry is non-existent till it has clothed itself in words: that in the true poet the emotion and the expression of it come into being—at once, and are one."

Poetry can hardly be covered by formulæ and does not lend itself to precise or scientific analysis. The outward form cannot be always rigidly maintained, and must be adjusted to its contents. (These involve an "infinite variety of mood and emotion, the complex interplay of ideas and their hidden associations, the perpetually shifting panorama of mental imagery which take place in the consciousness when it is confronted with a work of art. And in each separate art there is, in addition, the whole mass of considerations affecting the technical devices by which colour, form and sound are brought into the service of expression."*)

Says Courthope†: "...the word poetry may be used to signify either the outward form in which imaginative thought is expressed by means of metrical language, or that inward conception of the mind preliminary to creation which is shared by the poets with the professors of the other fine arts." But there is a modern school of poets which insists that all poetic creation is the work solely of the poet's mind: form, they tell us, is everything, matter nothing. Some of the greatest classic authors have protested against this view, and in their opinion a large portion of the life, and even of the form, of every poem is contained germinally in the subject-matter. "The poet whose subject is completely assimilated to his genius will not fail in point of eloquence and lucid order" (Horace).

Yet in his *Poetics* Aristotle considers separately the different ingredients of poetry—the medium, the objects and the manner or mode of imitation, the medium being 'rhythm, language or harmony either singly or combined,** and the objects of imitation being 'men in action.' The mode or manner of imitation may be either narrative or dramatic—the poet may "either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged—or he may present all his characters living and moving before us."†† Thus however valuable may be the theory of unity of impression of art in the abstract, it is impossible to avoid discussion of its different ingredients in a work of art.

The objects of imitation, as Aristotle would call them, or the

*Neilson, *Essentials of Poetry*, p. 14.

†*Life in Poetry: Law in Taste*, p. 4.

***Poetics*, tr. Butcher, p. 7.

††*Poetics*, tr. Butcher, p. 13.

theme of poetry may be of various kinds. Classification of poetry depends in one sense on the nature of these. According to the *Poetics* the actual objects are three-fold—moral qualities, the permanent dispositions of the mind, which reveal a certain condition of the will, transient emotions or passing moods of feeling, and actions in their proper and inward sense. These last are mainly an inward process, a psychical energy working outwards, deeds, incidents, events, situations etc. being included under it in so far as they spring from an inward act of will or elicit some activity of thought or feeling. Human life, including mental processes, overt acts and moral urge or feelings would thus seem to be the sole source of the subject of poetry. On this principle landscape and animals do not rank as poetic themes. It has been pointed out how "Aristotle's theory is in agreement with the practice of the Greek poets and artists of the Classical period, who introduce the external world only in so far as it forms a background of action, and enters as an emotional element into man's life and heightens the human interest." It is significant that the examples of literary art given by Aristotle are the mimes of Sophron, Xenarchus and Plato's *Dialogues*, which are all in prose, and Homer's epics and the tragedies.

In modern times Aristotle's view in so far as it relates to the landscape has been dissented from. Man and Nature, as God's creation, are recognised as equally fit for poetic treatment along with the Divine Being who transcends both and in whom both find their fulfilment.

Shairp says, "There is no truth cognisable by man which may not shape itself into poetry. It matters not whether it be a vision of Nature's ongoings, or a conception of the understanding, or some human incident, or some truth of the affections, or some moral sentiment, or a glimpse into the spiritual world. Any one of these may be so realised as to become a fit subject for poetic utterance."

Nature has been the theme of poetry for a pretty long time. But in the past Nature has been considered as animate and chiefly as the manifestation of an unseen power—good or evil. Man at one time crouched in blind and abject fear before malignant deities identified with natural objects and the elements. In Scandinavia, the frost-giant was feared and men sought to propitiate him. The Aryan mythology furnishes instances of "brighter Nature-worship," of admiration of the benignant powers of nature as gods and goddesses. "Then succeeded the time," says one writer, "when, on the one hand, the mind of man separated itself from the world and asserted its distinct existence ; and when, on the other, the thought of deity,

under the guidance of reflection and philosophy, gradually extricated itself from the visible appearances in which it had been so long imbedded.”*

At this stage Nature, if no longer deified, was regarded as the revelation of the wisdom of God. Says the Scripture, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” Beauty of Nature was not scrutinised, but was assumed to be a reflection of divine effulgence. One poet sings in this devotional mood :

“Thou art, O God, the life and light
Of all this wondrous world we see—
Its glow by day, its smile by night
Are but reflections caught from Thee.”

Contemplation of nature’s beauty was recognised as a means of uplifting the human soul to a higher level.

Even Kepler, the scientist, after his discovery of some of the laws of planetary motion, said that all that he had been able to do was to read a few of the thoughts of God. “Poetry,” says Shairp, “has three objects, which in varying degrees enter into it—Man, Nature and God. The presence of this last pervades all great Poetry, whether it lifts an eye of reverence directly towards Himself, or whether the presence be only indirectly felt, as the centre to which all deep thoughts about Man and Nature ultimately tend.” When the eye rests on the landscape, and the heart responds to its beauty, the emotion evoked points to the Divine Being as its source. “This kindling of heart in the presence of Nature may be said to be another aspect of reason” and is a prominent mark of a large mass of good nature poetry. Wordsworth thus describes the experiences of the shepherd lad who saw the sunrise on the hills of Scotland :—

The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle : Sensation, Soul, and form
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being ; in them did he live,
And by them did he live ; they were his life.

**On Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, p. 26.

In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God;
Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request ;
Rapt into still communion which transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him.

The inevitable effect of the realisation of the truth is a feeling of wonder or of admiration. This has been fuller and larger in proportion as man's insight into the significance of Nature's beauty and his appreciation of her silent message have been keener. As Coleridge says, "In wonder all Philosophy began : in wonder it ends : and Admiration fills up the interspace."

Ascription of human feeling or emotion to Nature forms the next stage. This is what is commonly known as pathetic fallacy. Here detailed study of Nature is avoided and her vague and dim aspects only are considered. Man projects his own personality into the landscape, rivers and hills. They seem to be weeping and laughing, gloomy and buoyant according to the mood of the observer. The poet establishes a sort of kinship between the movements of Nature and his own heart, and the latter grows responsive to the influence of the former. "Nature is wooing his spirit in manifold and mysterious ways to elevate him with her vastness and sublimity, to gladden him with her beauty, to depress him with her bleakness, to restore him with her calm. This quick interchange of feeling between the world without and the world within, this vast range of sympathy, so subtle, so unceasing, so mysterious, is a fact as certain and as real as the flow of the tides or the motion of the earth. Yet, though truth it be, it is one which Science cannot recognise, and which she has left wholly to the poet".* To catch the subtle message of Nature, a highly sensitive soul or imaginative mind is necessary. The wealth of meaning that lies hidden in Nature and the interchange of appeal and response that is possible between the world without and the world within, are not available to all. They have to be discovered afresh by every poet or imaginative thinker.

He gets only what he deserves and appropriates only what he can assimilate. "There is in Nature just as much, or as little, as the soul of each can see in her. And in order to see, the soul must have been trained for it both by habitual converse with the outer world,

* Shairp : *On Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, Pp. 22-23

and also by converse with other regions of being, with other teachers.”*

Though man and nature are generally the main themes of poetry, each is capable of sub-divisions, and often there is a combination of the two—one forming the background of the other so as to punctuate and glorify it or reduce it to insignificance. Under “man” come action, human society, and human thoughts and ideals, including passions, sentiments and spiritual hankerings. Nature may be quite peaceful or wild—and the boiling, tempestuous sea, the happy valley, the sunlit landscape, the bare hill-top, and the arid, dismal desert are equally admissible to the domain of poetry. But nature alone, however attractive otherwise, hardly satisfies the claims of the best specimens of poetic art unless brought into some sort of relationship with the human soul. Equally may it be emphasised that thought or speculation, divorced from the sensible world and from nature, detracts from the merit of poetry if it becomes its exclusive subject-matter.

It is a terrible business for poetry when it is wholly employed on man or wholly employed on Nature. In either case, the poetry becomes thin, feeble, unimaginative, incapable of giving impulse or bringing comfort.

/ Pope’s poetry furnishes a typical example of the former kind. It is the poetry of society in the city—of smart society—and is concerned with the characters of literary men—poetasters, pamphleteers, journalists,—of public men—politicians, party-leaders, and their henchmen—and of cliques and caucuses. It bestows praise and blame mostly on party considerations. Drawing-room talks and coffee-house debates mostly supply to Pope the inspiration to poetic composition. According to him, “the proper study of mankind is man,” and thus he also comes to handle philosophical and moral topics—“such morality as governs the social world at play with thought, but shrinking from experience.” Mankind means in Pope’s line “mankind in London only,” a city prominent for certain specific activities and developing certain characteristic features—fashions, foibles and weaknesses. He did not attempt any wide study of universal human nature—of humanity in the proper sense of the term.

(Pope’s satire was directed against the society he knew and its members bearing certain labels. As these were ephemeral, the value of his satire too was short-lived) Here Dryden was different, and his shafts were directed as much against human nature as against individuals, although the two poets were on the same footing,

*On Poetic Interpretation of Nature, p. 31.

in so far as man, divorced from Nature and from the highest ideal, was the theme of each. "Dryden's work is done in large outline," but Pope's is narrow and thin.

Even Dryden's didactic poetry had a larger range—it was based on matters in which he took an active interest, and in which he was himself involved.

(Pope's didactic poetry adopted a feeble philosophy, not his own, and it was put into verse more exquisite than fitted the philosophy, or than it deserved. "There was but little personal force behind it, little personal conviction.....all he cared for was to give it the most exquisite, concise, witty, finished expression he could.")*

As already remarked, Nature finds almost no place in Pope's poetry. But Nature has an instinctive appeal for man. "A certain love of Nature, a vital interest which man's intelligence and feeling take in the outward world, a desire to harmonise its doings with our own, to picture them as human, to give them an intelligence and passion like our own, appears to have been implanted in the human race from the earliest times; and this seems to be another of those matters which divide us by an unfathomable gulf from the lower animals".** Hence banished from poetry in the Age of Pope, Nature re-asserted its claims vigorously in the next epoch and assumed considerable importance in its poetic output. But even before the publication of the *Dunciad* and long before the death of Pope, was published *Winter*, the first of the *Seasons* of James Thomson, in which the beauty of Nature was rapturously sung. But he was only one of a large group of poets whose main characteristic was keen delight in detailed and faithful description of Nature. "In the *Seasons* one description succeeds another, one series of reflections another, without any natural cohesion—patch after patch". "...in his outbursts of joy and adoration, in his descriptions of natural beauty, in his idyllic tales, he piled addition on addition, epithet on epithet, rhetoric on rhetoric."° Thomson's most characteristic work (*Castle of Indolence*) is largely an imitation of Spenser. The landscape, leafy and verdant, is most prominent in it. His love of Nature is not confined to the borders of England. He is a cosmopolitan, and his sympathies are extended to the most distant parts of the world. "He takes us to the tropics; to their vegetation, climate, rivers, animals, and to the human life of those who dwell therein; to *Niger's yellow stream, and Ganges' sacred*

*S. Brooke: *Naturalism in English Poetry*, pp. 6-7.

**S. Brooke: *op. cit.*, p. 18.

°S. Brooke: *op. cit.*, p. 36.

wave,"* to Peru, Nubia, Abyssinia, Egypt, to Greenland, Russia etc.

The direct and detailed description of Nature in Thomson prompted by a delight in natural scenery as such, with man as an incidental figure introduced only as one of the other animals in the scene, seems to be something extraordinary in the age of Pope. Its origin, it has been pointed out, was not English but Scottish. Henryson in the 15th century, Dunbar at the beginning of the 16th and Gawin Douglas later in the same century had described the beauty of Nature in their native country for its own sake without any touch of conventionality and with profound love and admiration. They depicted not trim gardens or the cultivated countryside, but the weird moorland, the torrential streams overflowing their banks, and the biting frost and wintry gales. It is this poetry of "Caledonia—stern and wild" that influenced Thomson's *Seasons*.

A widening of sympathy which is an indirect effect of his love of Nature, does introduce a human element in his Nature poetry, for it leads to the realisation that the fundamental basis of the human mind is the same all over the world, and it is this which inspires "his world-wide love of liberty, his hatred of oppression, his pleasure in simple, homelike life, in the common doing and welfare of silent, unrecorded humanity."* The same recognition eventually furnished the incentive to the Revolution in France, which tried to abolish class privileges and usher in an era of equality and fraternity.

While Thomson loved Nature as she was and chiefly for her own sake, and, therefore, restored natural description to poetry which in Pope's school was almost exclusively concerned with the man of the city, his party and his social conduct, Gray and Collins admired Nature and sang of her charms as conceived by the best of the Greek poets. The nobility, simplicity and solid art of the Hellenic masters have left indelible marks on both the poets—on Gray more than on Collins. The latter's *Ode to Simplicity* and *Ode to Evening* struck the high note of Naturalism—love of simple Nature in all its tenderness and quietude. But Gray also loved the bardic tales of the early Britons and of mediæval Wales and these chimed in with his love of rude and almost savage scenery. Though he moralised Nature, (as in the *Ode On the Spring*), his love of the sensuous was keen. He was "one of the first who made her a constant study, who sought her in her wildness, who travelled far and wide to find her solitudes".^o The

*S. Brooke : *op. cit.*, p. 31.

^oS. Brooke : *op. cit.*, p. 65.

Elegy and the *Odes* of Gray depict the cultivated and "prim" landscape, but his letters are "full of careful and carefully composed descriptions" of mountains, moors, dells and gorges, torrents and streams of the Lake Country, of the Welsh solitudes and of the hills of Scotland. Love of Nature in Gray and Collins, however, must not be overstressed and seen in a wrong perspective. Collins has more of instinctive delight in Nature than Gray whose feeling is worn down by academic polishing. "The art is more than the imagination", for the artificial age had still its influence on him. Nevertheless Gray advanced the poetry of Nature. "He redeemed it from the mere cataloguing of Thomson. He brought into it careful composition. He harmonised it, up to a certain point, with man He opened the way to the addition to it of natural passion."* What is equally important, he developed an interest in human life in the country, where it was close to Nature—in the farmer, the peasant and the poor. These figure prominently in the *Elegy* as if they are part of Nature and are merged in her. It has however to be admitted that Nature, though important, is painted by both Gray and Collins always as a background to human life and is secondary, while in Thomson man is secondary and Nature is an object of primary importance.

(Wordsworth's poetry gives equal importance to Nature and Man and rolls them into one, as it were. It is thus different from the work of Thomson on the one hand and that of Pope on the other. As already indicated, the former attaches exclusive pre-eminence to outer Nature which is dead and lifeless, while in the latter Man (the City Man or the Sophisticated Man) fills the whole canvas and monopolises the reader's attention. But Wordsworth really equates (man's) mind and Nature, and identifies the two. He feels that "in and beneath the matter of the universe, multitudinously shaping and reshaping itself into a million, million forms, there is a soul, a living principle, acting, even thinking, it may be loving; and at last speaking to him, communicating itself to him."^o Wordsworth gives to this active principle a kind of personality (either human or superhuman)—a character, a will of its own, its own soul, its own work. Hence, Nature in his view pulsates with life, with emotion and with thought. He is convinced that

"Every flower enjoys the air it breathes."

He makes the moving powers of Nature the "over-soul of the things they touch," adding to them a new life of joy and jollity, of solemnity

*S Brooke : *op. cit.*, pp. 66—7.

^oS. Brooke : *op. cit.*, p. 142.

or peace. It has been remarked by S. Brooke, "Nature is to him a person, has a being of her own; realises herself as one in the whole of the universe, realises herself in each form of the outer world, as a distinct life in each distinct thing."* As a person, Nature enjoys quietude, bliss and inter-communion of love. The heart of Nature beats with joy for ever. This is manifest in Spring, in harvest-time and in Autumn, inspite of the ravages of storm and bitterness of frost. And the most sublime aspect of Nature is the link of friendship and love which establishes inter-communion of things with one another. Streams and hills, trees and creepers, stars and winds, birds and animals speak to one another in soft whispers of love.)

The ordinary human being in the midst of drab and realistic surroundings is generally the theme of Crabbe's poetry. It is a far cry from the poetry of Wordsworth where the sublimest human thoughts and feelings are personified in the conception of Nature. Crabbe's poetry knows no aristocratic circle, no fine society and no cliques or parties of clever or literary men. Middle, lower middle and low class people in rural areas in villages and in farmland have grown prominent in it. Town life is distressing or too high and expensive for them. Crabbe paints faithfully the misery, tragedy and wretchedness of the peasant and the workman and never shrinks from delineating in detail the ravages committed by their uncontrolled passions in the sordid surroundings of their huts and hamlets which can by no stretch of imagination be called beautiful. Nature and Man are tinged with the same livid hue or tarred by the same brush. In his poetry there is neither romance nor scholarship. Crabbe's own early life as a poor warehouseman was responsible for the *milieu* and the characters in poems like the *Parish Register* and the *Borough* where crime and agony are described with unrelenting and repulsive accuracy. There are, of course, redeeming features, and the comic spirit manifests itself in his later years. But Crabbe makes his mark definitely by his imaginative reality, and his closeness to Nature as the background to it. The swelling phrase, the lofty sentiment and the beauty of Nature are unknown in his poetry, and naked realism is its prominent mark.

Unpolished Scottish life in its manifold aspects is the subject-matter of Burns's poetry. It is Celtic, not Teutonic, in its love of Nature, its 'hot, frank and satiric abuse', its pathetic power and quick passion. "He keeps himself throughout to the scenery, the subjects, the heroes, the warlike struggles, the rustic life, the women of his

*S. Brooke: *op. cit.*, p. 147.

own land.”* His songs are mostly rustic songs, though they have a touch of chivalric sentiment and half-courtly note of the Augustan School. The roaring, ranting wit of Burns is often mixed up with the savage brilliancy of his satire. Of “The Jolly Beggars” it has been said, “Every man and woman in it is alive to the last rag on their bodies ; and coarse as they are, it is impossible, so vivid is their humanity, to help feeling kindly to them... Their jollity seems to redeem their naughtiness.” *Tam O’Shanter* paints a reckless society, and its recognition of the spirit of drink is admirable in its phrasing. Lines like

Go fetch to me a pint o’ wine,
An’ fill it in a silver tassie,
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie

are characteristic. Burns’s love-poetry has nothing to do with lords and ladies, or even with gentlefolk in society. It refers to the poor in their cottages and in scattered huts upon the moor, the merry girl who meets her lover at the fair, the old man and his wife who are ‘declined in the vale of years.’

Nature in Burns is ordinary Scottish village scenery. It is not endowed with a soul or with the exalted feeling of love as in Wordsworth. Burns has no philosophy of Nature, and his hills, dales and meadows—half-wild, half-cultivated—have a special sentiment of their own—curiously and charmingly special. They merely form the background to Scottish life in Burns’s poetry.

Action and movement constitute the theme of a large body of Byron’s poetry. He devotes himself to the narration of episodes or of events, rather than to the delineation of man as a complex entity—a blend of spirit and matter, nicely balanced, profound and mysterious. In eastern tales like *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *The Giaour* etc. daring adventures bringing out physical prowess, quickness of muscular movement and mental agility engage the poet’s skill. These appear in descriptions of battles, sieges, bombardments of cities and citadels, the galloping of the steed, the swift thrust of the rapier which form Byron’s usual stock-in-trade. This is the account of the charge in *The Siege of Corinth* :

“The steeds are all bridled, and snort to the rein;
Curved is each neck, and flowing each mane ;
White is the foam of their champ on the bit ;
The spears are uplifted, the matches are lit ;

*S. Brooke : *op. cit.*, p. 127.

The cannon are pointed, and ready to roar,
And crush the wall they have crumbled before...
When the culverin's signal is fired, then on ;
Leave not in Corinth a living one —”

The description of the ride in *Mazeppa* is a glorification of speed :—

Away, —Away !—and on we dash !
Torrents less rapid and less rash.
Away, —away ! My breath was gone,
I saw not where he hurried on.
‘Twas scarcely yet the break of day,
And on he foam’d—away ! —away !

... ..

Away, away, my steed and I,
Upon the pinions of the wind,
All human dwellings left behind ;
We sped like meteors through the sky

Violent passion goes hand in hand with violent, spasmodic action in Byron's work. Sudden onrush of feelings has its reaction—desire for vengeance is followed by deep repentance. In *Lara* the hero's pride is colossal and his frenzy is terrible. In *The Siege of Corinth* a deep sense of wrong creates a tempest in the mind of Alp, the hero, and urges him on to swift action. Even love has nothing sweet and elevating in it—it is in Byron a reckless and stormy passion which blasts the lives of lovers. The Giaour says :—

The cold in clime are cold in blood,
Their love can scarce deserve the name ;
But mine was like the lava flood
That boils in Aetna's breast of flame.

The sneering, cynical and solitary Byronic hero is notorious. The tumult in his soul reveals him to be an abnormal creature. In him there has been an over-emphasis on only a few of the human faculties to the exclusion of the others. The Byronic hero has not been able to realise the ideal of human perfection so as to be able to attain to the fullest stature of man as the noblest and best creation of God.

Nature sets off the Byronic hero. It is alternately stormy and deadly quiet when it symbolises infinite melancholy and gloom. It does not, as in Wordsworth, inspire and gladden the human heart or reflect the glory and bliss of spiritual elevation.

Shelley's poetry is just the opposite of Byron's, abstract notions

or philosophical conception being its main themes. It is concerned not with action or movement in space and time, but with sublime ideas. The principal characters in his narrative and dramatic poetry are symbolic of moral virtues and vices. His lyrics and sonnets mostly sing of ideals. *Epipsychidion* deals with the subtlest Platonic conception of love as a comprehensive cosmic principle. The beloved, though mortal in shape, is also

An image of some bright Eternity ;
A shadow of some golden dream ; a Splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless ; a tender
Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions life's dull billows move.....

Her beauty is

.....one intense

Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence.

Intellectual Beauty in Shelley's *Hymn* is the Platonic Archetype which imparts grace to all earthly objects. The poet exclaims,

"Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, where art thou gone?"

In *Adonais* Shelley sings of immortality that defies death and annihilation, the survival of the One amidst the passing away of the Many, the abiding Reality and its ephemeral, phenomenal manifestations. He is here a *Vedantist* and a Platonist in combination.

"The *One* remains, the *many* change and pass ;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments."

The Revolt of Islam is called the most Godwinian of Shelley's poems, though Godwin's abstruse speculation has also left its impression on *Queen Mab*. In the former the conflict between good and evil is figured as a cosmic struggle. *Prometheus Unbound* bears traces of the influence of both Godwin and Plato. Prometheus, that colossal and splendid figure, stands out as the emblem of opposition to tyrannical power. And he also stands for Platonic knowledge and later attains to the level of Absolute Good. He triumphs because of the inherent superiority of good over evil. Thus the most remarkable feature of Shelley's poetry is the prominence of allegories and visions in which appear shadowy figures as symbols of abstract ideas. As Taine puts it, "In his world the laws of life

are suspended or transformed. We move in this world between heaven and earth in abstraction and symbolism."

Quite different is the theme of the poetry of T. S. Eliot and some of the modern post-war authors *e.g.*, Owen and Sassoon. Shelley worshipped ideals, but these resplendent idols have tumbled down in the works of these moderns. Shelley had glowing visions; these are groping in darkness. Wordsworth as well as Shelley had taught men to hope and feel happy; these lay stress on despair and frustration. Disillusionment and boundless discontent furnish the key-note to their poetry. In *The Waste Land*, for example, there is a brooding sense of devastation, of irretrievable loss, of the ruin of the cherished aspirations of man.

After the above *résumé* of the characteristics of different kinds of poetry, it is comparatively easy to explain what pictorial poetry is like. It is not the poetry of action or movement, nor is it concerned with the mystery of the human mind. Portraiture of manners or customs of the distance past, as in Scott, or exposition of principles of morals or government, as in Goldsmith and Dryden, or castigation of social vice and folly, as in Dryden and Pope, is not its province. Praise of Nature as impregnated with thought, emotion or spirituality, as in Wordsworth, is equally outside its scope. Even nature as background to human thought is not its theme. Pictorial poetry has as subject-matter, picture or painting, sculpture or tapestry itself, or any other object—human face, form or landscape or dress—which can be dealt with graphically by painter's brush. It relies for its appeal on its power of stimulating visual memory. Imagery based on contrast of colours or of light and shade or on suggestion of volume *i.e.*, three dimensions is one of its literary devices. Building up an image bit by bit through the use of short sentences, and the inter-twining of tenuous lines representing tapestry-weaving are also common.

In order to arrive at a more precise and clear conception of pictorial poetry, it is necessary to analyse the impression made by literary work on the human mind. An adequate appreciation of this requires an examination of complicated mental processes.

When a poem is read, there are a number of reactions in the readers. According to I. A. Richards, there are first the visual sensations of the printed words. These are followed by images directly suggested by the sensations themselves. Free images *i.e.*, images not directly connected with the words come next. Then there are references to, or 'thinkings of', various things. Emotions are the outcome of all these. The visual sensations of words have "other

companions so closely tied to them as to be only with difficulty disconnected. The chief of these are the auditory image—the sound of the words in the mind's ear—and the image of articulation—the feel in the lips, mouth and throat, of what the words would be like to speak.'* There is some difference between imagining word-sounds and uttering them, and this is brought out in silent readings as distinct from reading aloud. Auditory and articulatory images determine the former, while the success of the latter depends on phonetic pronunciation, voice etc.

Visual images, which are called free images, are pictures in the mind's eye indirectly suggested by the printed words and are the outcome of the law of association. When these words impress the visual organs and corresponding images are produced on the mind, other images which have often been found to be connected with the latter, naturally appear in the region of consciousness.

The visual image differs in vividness and distinctness. Sometimes it is clear in outline and sometimes blurred. When it is pictorial, or has the characteristics of graphic representation on the canvas, we have pictorial poetry. It has, of course, to be admitted that the pictorial qualities of an image differ from reader to reader. Much depends on previous experience and mental outfit. "Individuals differ not only in the type of imagery which they employ, but still more in the particular images which they produce. In their whole reactions to a poem, or to a single line of it, their free images are the point at which two readings are most likely to differ Fifty different readers will experience, not one common picture but fifty different pictures."° Again, images which are different in their sensory qualities may produce the same effects on different readers.

It is now relevant to enquire into the essential qualities of a picture. Mere pigmentation on the canvas does not possess them. Contrast of colours may be successful in attracting notice, but has no real pictorial qualities. The effect produced by a picture on a spectator is a complex one; but it must induce in him a sense of reality. When we see a picture, we see, besides a pigment-covered surface, "certain planes or volumes in what is the picture-space". In the latter case, we have a complex response made up of "perceivings and imaginings due to the intervention of mental structures left behind by past experience and excited by the stimulus". Sense of volume is quite different from a perfectly flat, meticulously detailed depiction of

*I. A. Richards : *Principles of Literary Criticism* : pp. 118—119.

°I. A. Richards : *op. cit.*, p. 122.

conventionally conceived objects—which is “only a field or area of varied light an assemblage of blots and patches of colour”.^o

The transformation of the image of a flat surface into images or different planes or volumes is rapid or slow according to one's previous experience. As I. A. Richards puts it, “the process whereby an impression which, if interpreted in one way, is correctly counted as a sign of a flat coloured surface, becomes, when differently interpreted, an intricately divided three-dimensional space—this process is one of the intervention of images of several kinds...Perhaps the most important of the images which come in to give depth, volume, solidity to the partly imagined and partly perceived ‘picture-space’ are those which are the relicts of eye-movements, kinesthetic images of the convergence of the eyes and accomodation of the lenses according to the distance of the object contemplated.”*

Whatever the process and whatever the stages of this transformation may be, the pictorial image, in the real sense of the term, does not emerge till its completion. And pictorial poetry must evoke in the reader a pictorial image as explained above, including picture-space and suggestion of planes and volume or three-dimensional space. It is thus different from reflective or even narrative poetry where the theme is either abstract idea, feeling or passion on the one hand or movement or action on the other. Of course, some pictorial representation is inevitable in the case of the latter. But it is not the main point, and it is not faithful and real so far as execution is concerned. In the poetic treatment of a battle-scene, there is undoubtedly some delineation of the combatants, of the battle-field, of horses, cannon, swords etc. But the emphasis, in most cases, is on the progress of the action and its consequences on horror, casualty, carnage etc. and not on the pictorial image.

✓ This That - These
This is a visual Lyfe

^oI. A. Richards : *op. cit.*, p. 149.

*I. A. Richards : *op. cit.*, p. 150.

LECTURE II

Chaucer

OF English authors who wrote remarkably pictorial poetry, the earliest and greatest was certainly Chaucer. One of the reasons can be easily guessed—he lived in the Middle Ages, though his outlook was noticeably modern in many respects. Monarchy, sacerdotalism and chivalry were the prominent institutions of the period, along with the clearly marked social strata which were handed down to later ages. They had spectacular manifestations which were the most attractive features of the epoch. Monarchy had its special symbols and sartorial paraphernalia, as the gorgeous Catholic Church had its attractive mode of worship, ecclesiastical architecture and mural decoration. Chivalry displayed itself splendidly in impressive pageantry.

Chaucer was captivated by this aspect of the Middle Ages as much as Scott was. The latter's romanticism was, as is well known, a sort of return to the mediæval epoch—a harking back to the past,—and it expressed itself in the portrayal of old institutions, manners and customs as much as in the reproduction of colour and gaudiness against the drab background of the contemporary age. Chaucer having been a child of the Middle Ages, his portraiture was suggested by personal observation and not by antiquarian studies. Chaucer's father and grandfather (at least) belonged to a family of "vintners" in London. "What a curious medley of merchants, sailors, tavern-keepers and customers of all kinds there must have been streaming in and out of the vintner's house! The child's observations were not lost upon the poet, and they helped him to picture accurately the various trades of the city." Like his father he had friends in the court and he was in close touch with them, while John of Gaunt was his great patron.

Chaucer's contact with royalty was established when he was first appointed a "valet of the King's household." He rose soon to be an "esquire of less degree." The office, it has been said, was designed to suit a poet. The duties of the 37 squires attached to the King's household, consisted in "withdrawing to the Lords' Chambers within Court, in winter and summer, in afternoons and evenings,

there to keep honest company after their coming, in talking of chronicles of kings, and of their policies, or in piping or harping, and singing of martial deeds.”*

[As a child Chaucer had been told the stories of the splendid victories of Edward III, and as a youth, he was seriously thinking of taking arms himself. After the Black Prince had triumphed at Poitiers, Chaucer was one of the detachment which went out to meet him on his return to England. When the English besieged Rheims during Edward III's invasion of France, Chaucer was made a prisoner by the French and remained in captivity till ransomed by the King. Chaucer thus knew the court as well as the camp.]

After his marriage royal “favours began to shower on him in the shape of pensions, titles, grants, missions, remunerative posts, and sinecures.” In 1367 Chaucer was granted by the King an annuity for life.

[Thus Chaucer's contact with contemporary society was quite extensive. He had led a busy and varied life, being in turn a page, a squire, a diplomat and a government official. He held widely different offices in the departments of customs, roads, buildings, forests etc. He mixed with soldiers, civilians and the merchants of the city; he had dealings with foreigners in Flanders, in France and in Italy. He must have been “a clever negotiator” as well as a clever courtier. But he was supremely unconcerned in everything that did not appeal to his sense of sight. He was not interested in trends of events and the history of his times. Ideals found in him no enthusiast.] Theories of government, the claims of the peasants, and the right of private judgment in religious matters left him absolutely cold and fell flat on him. There is no reference to these either in his romantic verse or, what is more surprising, in his realistic studies. There is not a single patriotic line in his work, says Legouis, though he might have found it useful, in order to ingratiate himself at court, to sing national strains and celebrate the King's victories. He never speaks of France as of a country at war with his own, but he loves, imitates or translates her writers. “.....Either because his tastes led him elsewhere, or at the dictates of prudence, Chaucer is almost wholly silent in his poems about what we should call politics. He avoided the subject, sometimes for artistic reasons, sometimes to get a more direct hold of the realities of life on the humble plane

*E. Legouis, *Chaucer*, p. 9.

where most of his countrymen spent their days and waged their battles." Thus Chaucer is supremely disinterested and objective—passionless and unemotional. He is a close observer, and his watchful eyes and alert mind never fail to notice the slightest detail of form and tint of colour, movement and speech, pronunciation and intonation, fashion and foible.

The colourful life of the Middle Ages in the court, the church, the tavern and the public street greatly impressed Chaucer. The concrete was more attractive to him than the abstract, the particular and specific more than the general. And mediæval shows, pageants and moralities moulded his artistic sense. Allegories and personifications were a prominent feature of the art of the Middle Ages. Virtues and vices were trotted out by it in suggestive costumes. Love of variegated hues was in those days an inevitable consequence of interest in pageantry as much as in painting and carving. Chesterton says, "To watch the unfolding of the genius of Chaucer is to watch a pattern changing into a picture, or into a series of pictures. It is something like the illusion of a sleepy or a sick child, staring at a wall-paper, for whom the flat plants seem to branch and blossom, or figures begin to move among the formal trees: his work begins with the purely rhythmic decorative style that possessed mediæval prose and verse, even more than mediæval painting and carving."

Undoubtedly there is a difference between the earlier and the later style of Chaucer. The stiffness of the former contrasts with the ease and freedom which characterize the latter. *The Canterbury Tales* is an improvement on *The House of Fame*. But this has been due to maturer experience, mellower wisdom and a greater sense of reality. The pictorial method and the sense of colour continue, though there appear keener critical discernment and richer humour in his later work.

(The pictorial quality of Chaucer's poetry had its influence on a poet separated from him by 400 years. Morris looked back on the Middle Ages from which he derived varied inspiration. And he acknowledged Chaucer as his master. It is significant that Morris was a pre-Raphælite artist—poet, builder and engraver.)

Rembrandt represents a type of realism in painting, and Chaucer's portraits have often been compared with his work on the canvas. Realism ordinarily precludes a high degree of finish, and the defect is palpable in the work of the Dutch painter. In Chaucer too

is to be noticed "a certain well-meaning clumsiness, stiffness in the contours, a fondness for trifling details." These are marks of immaturity in art, but are also clear evidence of the quality of Chaucer's pictorial work. Reference may be made to the *Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales* for a full appreciation of these characteristics.

Osbert Sitwell traces a similarity between some of Chaucer's portraits and early French and Italian paintings. He says, "To the work of Chaucer it is difficult to find a precise counterpart, though this may be because his great poems, with their burden of warm human feeling, to our modern eyes resemble the novel more nearly than the pure poem. Notwithstanding, some affinity is, I believe, to be detected between his *Balade*

Thy faire body, lat hit nat appere,
Lavyne; and thou, Lucesse of Rome toun,
And Poliscene, that boghten love so dere,
And Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,
Hyde ye your trouthe of love and your renoun;
And thou, Tisbe, that hast of love swich peyne;
My lady cometh, that at this may disteyne

and the most beautiful of French primitives, a saint by Froment or Fouquet's picture of the Madonna, guarded by those flying angels or red sealing-wax, at Antwerp. The flowers in Chaucer's poetry are Italian flowers, though, the same blossoms that spring from the verdant pastures of Botticelli.....But you would expect an Italian influence, as well as a French one, for he had visited the two countries."*

Legouis says that the *Prologue* is a veritable picture-gallery, and the companions of the road are like so many pictures hung on a wall. "Out of their frames, set at equal distance from each other, hung on the same plane and at the same height, the pilgrims look at us in turn; the only diversity is caused by two frames left unfilled (perhaps provisionally), with only the names written at the bottom, that of the Nun, Chaplain to the Prioress, and that of the priests accompanying her, or again by the five city artisans, members of one guild, who appear together on the same canvas, for the poet did not think it necessary to make a portrait of each."

Coming to the descriptions of the pilgrims, one notices many of the characteristics of portrait-painting. Chaucer bestowed close attention on the exact drawing of the features. The Squire had

**Sing High Sing Low*, pp. 107-8.

lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and greet of strengthe.

Of the Clerk the poet says :

As lene was his horse as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake;
But loked holwe, and ther-to soberly.
Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy.....

Brilliant colours are conspicuous in some of the dresses worn by the pilgrims. The young Squire is thus portrayed :

Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fresshe floures, *whyte* and *rede*.
Singinge he was, or floytinge, al the day;
He was as *fresh* as is the month of May.
Short was his goune, with sleeves longe and wyde.
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.

The Yeman

was clad in cote and hood of *grene*;
A sheef of *pecok-arwes brighte* and kene
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily;
(Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly.....)
A *not-heed* hadde he, with a *broun* visage.
Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage.
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other syde a *gay* daggere,
Harneised wel, and *sharp* as point of spere;
A Cristofre on his brest of *silver shene*.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of *grene*.....

The row of beads, worn by the Prioress around her arm, stands out in strong relief against her robe. It was of coral, and every tenth bead was green; it contrasted with the glitter of the brooch of gold, as did the ruddy complexion of the Franklin with the silvery white of his beard:

A Frankeleyn was in his companye;
Whyt was his berd, as is the *dayesye*.
Of his complexion he was *sangwyn*.

... ..

An anlas and a gipser al of silk
Heng at his girdel, *why*t as morne *milk*.

The Wife of Bath is also associated with gaudy colour from which we cannot take our eyes :

Hir hosen weren of fyn *scarlet reed*,
Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful *moiste* and newe.
Bold was hir face, and fair, and *reed* of hewe.

The Pardoner is portrayed in a very graphic manner :

This pardoner hadde heer as *yellow as wax*,
But smothe it heng, as dooth a *strike of flex* ;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And ther-with he his shuldres over-spradde.....
A *vernicle* hadde he sowed on his cappe.
His *walet* lay biforn him in his lappe.....

Some faces have the vividness of complexion which may be compared with the splash of colour on natural or fictitious things—the pimply face of the Somnour, fiery-red like a cherub's, flaming under his dark eyebrows, "the Miller's face, with his reddish beard, and with a wart on his nose crowned with a tuft of hair and with the two black holes of his nostrils and his mouth as big as a furnace" :

A Somnour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a *fyr-reed cherubinnes* face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.....
With scalled browes *blake*, and piled berd ;
Of his visage children were aferd.

As for the Miller,

His berd as any sowe or fox was *reed*,
And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,
Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres ;
His nose-thirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde ;
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.

Gaudy and strong colours fatigue the eye, and there is also the law of monotony forbidding their continued use. Relief is

necessary, and this is provided by the duller tints of the costumes of some of the pilgrims, *e. g.*, the Clerk, the grave Man of Law, the lean Reeve and the good Parson whose garment can hardly be said to have any decoration or colour at all. The Man of Law

rood but hoomly in a medlee cote
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale ;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

The Reve was a *sclendre*, plain man. He had a 'long surcate of pers' and bore 'a rusty blade' by his side. His horse was 'al pomely grey.' His beard was shaved and his hair was cropped short. Though possessed of prowess and military experience, the Knight was simple and modest, and his dress and appearance indicate this.

His hors were gode, but he was nat gay.
Of fustian he wered a gipoun
Al bismotered with his habergeoun.....

The Parson was wedded to poverty, devoted to the welfare of his parishioners, kind and benevolent. Rather than insist on the realisation of his tithes, he would give to the poor out of his own pocket. He would often visit

The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lyte,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.

[It must be emphasised that the impression produced by Chaucer's work is not exclusively due to what has here been called its "pictorial poetry." Chaucer was undoubtedly a master of this, but he had other features to intensify its effect. The realism which is claimed for him is not based solely on the pictorial qualities of his verse. The poet had resources unknown to the painter, for sounds were also at his disposal. The jingling of the bells on the Monk's palfrey, the pretty snuffling speech of the Prioress, the affected lisp of the Friar, the Pardoner's voice 'as small as hath a goat', the deep bass of the Somnour's voice—all these come to add to his realism. Again, Chaucer not only notices the colour of the dress, the form of the figure, the complexion of the face, the glance of the eye, the cut of the beard, the cropping of the hair etc., but is also particularly careful in pressing into his service qualities of mind, habits, idiosyncracies, virtues and little weaknesses. These serve to give clearer impressions of people when added to photographic reproductions of visible features. "The essential moral traits are

set forth with the same apparent simplicity, the same command over the means of expression which Chaucer displayed in depicting typical colours or garments. Simple biographical notes, suggestive anecdotes, traits peculiar to the individual or to his trade, lines which sum up a character, all these unite on the canvas into a forcible whole, with clean and vigorous outlines albeit a little stiff at times, bathed in a clear atmosphere, a picture never to be forgotten." Prof. Legouis says, "Our thoughts wander back to those primitive painters, whom we are inclined to consider at first with the patronising air of the grown-up for children, but whose art in the end reveals itself to us as so conscientious and so exact that we wonder whether the progress since accomplished in painting does not merely consist in exterior cleverness and idle subtlety, designed to evade or to obscure that which is essential." It is all the more true that Chaucer's portraits are as good as illuminated miniatures, and on reading the *Prologue* we have no need to regret that the pilgrims were not reproduced on the canvas by some contemporary master.)

There was another element which contributed to the graphic quality, the humanity, the reality of Chaucer's portrayal. [The characters in *The Canterbury Tales* are not stationary,—they move and grow. In other words, they have a place in a whole to the successful functioning of which they make their own contributions. The persons are not exclusive—they come into contact with one another. They quarrel, they jest, they tell stories. There is friendship as there is enmity, and a sort of development of action takes place, resulting in the development of character. "Chaucer's handling of his characters is not limited to the drawing of these truthful and delicate portraits which, by fixing the features, impart to them a certain immobility. He takes each pilgrim down from his frame and does not abruptly pass from the portrait to the tale. He does not let us forget that the speaker is a living being, whose gestures and tone of voice are peculiar to him.] In the course of their ride, he makes the pilgrims converse among themselves, he shows them calling out to each other, approving what one has just said and more often still rating each other. They give their opinions on the stories that have been told, and these comments reveal their dominant thoughts, their feelings and the objects of their interest. A sort of comedy is being enacted throughout the poem, which binds together the various parts. It is only just outlined, it is true, but it suffices to show the intentions and comic powers of the author."

This is an exposition of the dramatic method of Chaucer. As already suggested, it adds to the reality of the characters and imparts to them liveliness and vitality which would be wanting in mere portraits, however graphic. The same view of the essential humanity of the persons figuring in *The Canterbury Tales* is expressed in different language by another critic.]

Chesterton says, "The whole work takes on the character of a novel, the first true novel in History. In it the fundamental logic of most previous story-telling is already reversed. The story-tellers do not merely exist to tell the stories, the stories exist to tell us something about the story-tellers. The novel of character has appeared, and the novel of character is something rather different even from the epic, let alone the allegory or anecdote or story with a point."

LECTURE III

Spenser

[**ESCAPISM** is closely associated with imagination which is the mainspring of all art—literary, pictorial and plastic. But its psychology is not quite clear, and its origin is not probably very commendable, for defeatism appears to be at the root of it.) No sufficient defence of the mentality favouring it is possible, for the escape is always from reality, and the world that is divorced from reality has but a most precarious existence. However painful, unpleasant, unwelcome, uninviting or oppressive reality may be, we cannot get away from it, without detriment or prejudice to our essential nature, our moral being, our progress and our ultimate good. Yet escapism has been responsible for the production of high literary work. It inspired to a large extent the poetical work of Spenser. He wrote what might be called medieval romance in verse. Of the four cycles of romance current in his time, he chose the Arthurian cycle for his *Færie Queene*. In his Letter to Sir W. Raleigh he explains the scheme of his poem, and says how he proposes to bring in Arthur in spite of his intention to allegorize the Aristotelian virtues as described in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. The Arthurian adventures not only supplied the subject-matter of his poem but also suggested its style of composition. (The strings of unconnected narratives, the diffuseness of description, the want of co-ordination of different parts, lack of form, symmetry and artistic balance—all are the outcome of Spenser's escapism, *i. e.*, of his love of the archaic and the unreal, of the distant past where he sought relief from the ills of the present.)

[While Chaucer belonged to the Middle Ages, Spenser was a child of the Renaissance. Yet on account of his escapism his greatest work bears the impress of the medieval epoch, for chivalry with its brilliant pageantry and phantasmagoria furnishes its background, though Spenser's Protestantism and love of Platonic philosophy—two of the marks of the Elizabethan spirit—were also prominent.] His artistic instincts and tastes are mostly traceable to his medieval sympathies.

[Spenser's love of the medieval epoch and its ideals was partly the effect of his revulsion against his own age.] The poet knew disappointment in his early youth; his hopes of royal patronage had

been largely baffled by court intrigues, his happy life in Ireland had been blasted by fate, and he saw treachery and ingratitude all around him. From all this unpleasant reality Spenser wanted to escape into an ideal world, as Morris in later times escaped into the *Earthly Paradise*. This ideal world Spenser found in the Middle Ages.

His escape was thus from the world of reality into an imaginary world—the world of romance, which was not subject to the stern laws governing nature and human society. A dream atmosphere prevails over it, the essential breath of life is wanting in it. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* there are no men and women of flesh and blood. In this romantic allegory, there is neither credible story, nor naturalness of characterization. Here shadowy figures move about as in a dream. They are like lifeless and passionless robots moved by mechanical power. 'Without the similes, the world of the *Faerie Queene* would be vaguer and more lifeless. Una's lion and lamb might be in Berlin woolwork; they do not move; or they might have walked out of a Bestiary, where beasts have only moral leanings and fabulous customs.'* It is the similes that make amends for this want of movement by their freshness and images of energy and fighting. And Spenser 'puts into these delicate inlaid designs' some of the feeling and humanity that are denied to most of his phantom knights and abstract women.† Spenser's trailing stanza which has in it something lulling and hypnotic exactly fits in with his dream-atmosphere and his languors.

[Parallel to Spenser's imaginative escape into the Middle Ages was his physical residence in Ireland, away from London and the Court—the reality he had known so long and so well.] Ireland was a disturbed and distracted country which offered no social amenities. The English and the Irish lived in opposite camps, and lonely regions and forests intervened. Lord Grey de Wilton with whom Spenser went to Ireland as Secretary was selected to be Lord Deputy specifically to quell the disturbances. The south of Ireland was in fierce rebellion under the Earl of Desmond and Dr. Sanders who was an agent of the Pope and of the King of Spain. Grey's ruthlessness in dealing with rebellion and violence made a province a desert, causing to the absolute desolation of the south and west of Ireland. More than half a million acres of the escheated lands of the fallen Desmond were involved in it. [Spenser must have seen with his own eyes the dismal and dreary region, and his imagination must have

*Oliver Elton, *Modern Studies*, p. 71.

† " " " p. 72.

been profoundly impressed by the vast solitudes where there was no human habitation and where human voices were not to be heard. He was himself in communication with the English chiefs on the Council of Munster and with the undertakers among whom these lands were to be divided for the benefit of English yeomen, artisans and labourers who were to be settled on them.]

[Along with the imaginary conception of the Middle Ages, the Irish scenery must have influenced Spenser's pictorial poetry in the *Faerie Queene*.] The poem may have been commenced in England before Spenser's departure for Ireland and submitted to Harvey for his opinion. But Harvey's criticism gives no idea of its general plan or its metre, and nothing but the title of the poem appears to have been decided upon. The full plan must have been developed and its execution carried out in Ireland. Bryskett in his *Discourse of Civill Life* published in 1606 represents Spenser as stating, at a meeting of friends near Dublin held about the year 1582 that he was at work on a poem "in heroical verse under the title of a *Faerie Queene* to represent all the moral vertues." In the verses which are "addressed by the author of the *Faerie Queene* to various noblemen etc," the poem is presented to the Earl of Ormond and Ossory as

the wilde fruit which salvage soyl hath bred ;
Which, being through long wars left almost waste,
With brutish barbarisme is overspredd :

To Lord Grey Spenser offers his poem as "Rude rymes, the which a rustick Muse did weave in savadge soyle." The conclusion is therefore quite reasonable that—to use the words of Dean Church—"the first great English poem of modern times, the first creation of English imaginative power since Chaucer, and like Chaucer so thoroughly and characteristically English, was not written in England." Though the first draft of a small portion might have been commenced in England, it was retouched and brushed up in "the desolated wastes of wild and barbarous Ireland."

[It has been suggested that "the realities of the Irish wars and of Irish social and political life gave body and form to the allegory." Certainly in Ireland Spenser saw with his own eyes perilous adventures undertaken by valiant Englishmen as servants of the Queen. And there were the emissaries of Spain working secretly and arranging plots and ambushes against the loyal champions of their noble sovereign.] Englishmen thus found in Ireland "a universal conspiracy of fraud against righteousness—a universal battle going on between error and religion, between justice and the most insolent selfishness".

And this suggested the struggles of the champions of moral virtues against their enemies. To take one example, Lord Grey's sternness, enthusiasm and probity in the discharge of his duty are clearly reflected in the moral attributes of Artegall, the Knight of Justice in Spenser's allegory. (It is thus also likely that the Irish landscape should have influenced the description of natural scenery in the *Faerie Queene*. If the phantasmagoria of the Middle Ages and the pageantry of the Court of Elizabeth were responsible for colour-effects and brilliance in the decorative poetry of Spenser, the vivid pictorial description in the *Faerie Queene* of gloomy glades, dense forests and champaigns, of hills and streams owed a lot to the Irish surroundings in the midst of which Spenser spent about 18 years.) The natural beauty of the country around the manor and castle of Kilcolman, a ruined house of the Desmonds which came into Spenser's hands and was his abode and his home till his last days, has attracted the notice of his biographers. The castle was on a plain at the foot of "the last western falls of the Galtee range, watered by a stream now called the Awbeg, but which he (Spenser) celebrates under the name of Mulla. In Spenser's time it was probably surrounded with woods." "The earlier writers", says Dean Church, "describe it as a pleasant abode with fine views, and so Spenser celebrated its natural beauties". These are also traceable in the *Faerie Queene*.

Social intercourse was hampered in Ireland as it was in the dream world of romance. Both precluded intellectual and spiritual communion. Man was as solitary mentally in the desolate Ireland as in feudal and medieval Europe in spite of show and pageantry in royal courts and in the church.

Escape into the Middle Ages led, in Spenser's case, to indifference to contemporary affairs and to national ideals. He was not at all interested in any of the problems which were pressing the patriotic Englishman for solution. Spenser came, in consequence of his experience of court intrigues, to have a very low opinion of public life and of politicians, and he shut himself up in an ivory tower or a palace of art.

(After the living creature of flesh and blood had been excluded from the dream world in Spenser's poetry, what remained was solitary nature. This suffers in consequence of lack of contact with life. It sickens and grows unreal. Nature is beautiful and animate by contact with life which irradiates it and imparts to it part of its own attribute. Dead nature is supremely uninviting, and this fact is illustrated in the fairy land of Spenser.)

A strict and rigid line of demarcation between nature and man precludes all communion between them, for this depends on similarity and contact. And no real human figures or animals intrude into the landscapes of Spenser and Morris—they would have been absolutely out of place in the midst of dead nature. Solitary and lifeless, their landscapes are peculiarly lacking in attraction. The impression of beauty is largely suggested by life and movement and is spiritual in origin.* Descriptions of scenery from which real and living beings have been excluded do not really produce in the reader the cheering impression which is an essential element of æsthetic pleasure. Legouis's remark on Spenser's landscapes is very pertinent: "What an immense deserted country! how far away and long ago it seems! For days and days the Knights wander over desolate tracts riding over hills and dales, champaigns and forests, without meeting with a single living creature." Spenser's description of the lonely region through which Una travelled with the lion illustrates this:

Long she thus traveiled through deserts wyde,
By which she thought her wandring knight shold pas,
Yet never shew of living wight espyde;
Till that at length she found the troden gras,
In which the tract of peoples footing was,
Under the steepe foot of a mountaine hore :†

Guyon travelled long, without ever seeing any living being, before meeting Mammon;

.....long he yode, yet no adventure found,
Which fame of her shrill trompet worthy reedes ;
For still he traveild through wide wastfull ground,
That nought but desert wilderness shewed all around.‡

Prof. Elton's remark on Spenser's Garden of Adonis is very apt in this connection:

"No wind ripples over the beds of flowers, no bees hum about them; it is like some dim airless pleasance under glass.....no

* In his comment on a passage from the *Odyssey*, which describes how Ulysses landed on a lonely island and went to sleep in a wood, "having covered himself up with dead leaves," Ruskin says, "Nothing can possibly be more intensely possessive of the facts than this whole passage; the sense of utter deadness and emptiness, and frustrate fall in the leaves; of dormant life in the human body,—the fire, and heroism, and strength of it, lulled under the dead brown heap, as embers under ashes, and the knitting of interchanged and close strength of living boughs above. But there is not the smallest apparent sense of there being beauty elsewhere than in the human being." *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, p. 176.

†*F. Q.* I i.i. 1 .

‡*H. Q.* II vii. 2.

curious life patters through the silent undergrowth of Spenser's enchanted wood."

Spenser's spirit or social sympathy has little scope for asserting itself in a dead world of nature. Hence his senses, especially vision, grow abnormally acute. His perception becomes keen and concentrated, and he takes in impressions of the minutest particulars and the most delicate outlines and boundaries. This is another reason why precise and detailed description is a characteristic of Spenserian poetry a large part of which is pictorial poetry. This differs obviously from the poetry of emotion and passion and from poetry which sings of the glory of deeds. In pictorial poetry the outlines of natural objects, of flowers, fruits, trees, houses, turrets and domes are clear and definite. They impress themselves on our minds forcefully and have a powerful hold on our attention. But their sensuous appeal eliminates or excludes on occasion the spiritual significance of poetry.

This may be illustrated by reference to Spenser's description of the garden to which Cymochles was led by Phaedria :

No tree whose braunches did not bravely spring ;
No braunch whereon a fine bird did not sitt ;
No bird but did her shrill notes sweetely sing ;
No song but did containe a lovely ditt.
Trees, braunches, birds, and songs, were framed fitt
For to allure fraile mind to carelesse ease* :

Similarly pictorial is the description of the forest in which Red-crosse and Una took shelter :—

Much can they praise the trees so straight and hy,
The sayling Pine ; the Cedar proud and tall ;
The vine-propp Elme ; the Poplar never dry ;
The builder Oake, sole king of forrests all ;
The Aspine good for staves ; the Cypresse funerall ;
The Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours
And Poets sage ; the Firre that weepeth still :
The Willow, worne of forlorne Paramours ;
The Eugh, obedient to the benders will.....†

Another effect of the concentration of vision on the purely physical aspects of things is, in appropriate cases, the perception of contrast of colours, which is also traceable to the influence of the Middle Ages ; for medieval life in the court, the church and the city, was supremely colourful. Spenser's hues, as Elton points out, are bright and violent and are often drawn from luxury or the crafts. He

**i. Q. II. vi. 13.*

†*F. Q. I. i. 8.*

likes gold and ermine, silver and satin and purple, though he is not at home in clear and full light. For example, very gaudy colours are associated with Lucifera's court. Strong hues are sometimes set in relief against gloom and darkness. But Spenser generally avoids blank or void darkness and sees things in a chary half-light—the twilight of morning and evening or starlight mirrored in water. Sometimes the purpose is purely decorative, and the effect is just like that of rich dress or deeply dyed wood in panelled rooms.

[Apart from this splash of colours, there is a distinct pictorial element in Spenser. He reproduced copiously what he saw represented on the canvas or on the tapestry. Pictures and images drawn from the visual memory abound in his work.] The eye had a large part to play in the formation of most of the impressions which were embodied in his composition. But he did not or could not always fall back on personal experience and draw upon his own visual sense. Even when imagination came to his help, the method was the same, namely, tapestry-weaving or picture-drawing.

[Spenser had a splendid opportunity of seeing pictures, tapestries and sculptures in the collection of his patron, the Earl of Leicester. The latter had filled his castles of Kenilworth and Wanstead as well as his London residence with art treasures, and the catalogue of the pictures in his London house has been preserved*.] Though there is no evidence, engravings and tapestries from Arras and Flanders must have found a place in Leicester's collection and attracted Spenser's notice.

[Sidney's *Arcadia*, it has been pointed out, is a treasure-house of pictorial effects like the *Faerie Queene*, and some of its happiest pages reproduce in language man's artistic creation. The impulse may have come to Spenser from Sidney who was composing *Arcadia* when Spenser first made his acquaintance. The *Shepherds Calender*, it is to be noted, having been written earlier, has none of the pictorial magnificence of the *Faerie Queene*.]

Spenser fully utilised his experience in his great poem. In Castle Joyeous (III. i) pictures hang round the walls, and the poet describes their subject-matter *e.g.*, the love of Venus and Adonis,—
"The fayre Adonis, turned to a flowre":

And whilst he slept she over him would spread
Her mantle, colour'd like the starry skyes,
And her soft arme lay underneath his hed,
And with ambrosiall kisses bathe his eyes;

**F. Q.* I. i. 14 ; II. vii. 29.

†E. Legouis, *Spenser*, p. 97.

And whilst he bath'd with her two crafty spyes
 She secretly would search each daintie lim,
 And throw into the well sweet Rosemaryes,
 And fragrant violets, and Paunces trim;
 And ever with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him.*

The tapestries which adorn the House of Busirane, the wicked magician, are a "feast for the eyes and a peril for the soul:—

—the walls yclothed were
 With goodly arras of great majesty,
 Woven with gold and silke, so close and nere
 That the rich metall lurked privily,
 As faining to be hidd from envious eye.

The picture of Neptune and his sea-horses might, it has been suggested, do credit to the brush of any painter :

His seahorses did seeme to snort amayne,
 And from their nosethrilles blow the brynie streame,
 That made the sparckling waves to smoke agayne,
 And flame with gold; but the white fomy creame
 Did shine with silver, and shoot forth his beame.
 The God himselfe did pensive seeme and sad,
 And hong adowne his head as he did dreame.†

Legouis wonders whether Spenser had not before his eyes the picture of Jove's visit to Danæ, by Titian or by Correggio when he wrote the following stanza :—

..... into a golden shower
 Himselfe he chaung'd fair Danæ to vew;
 And through the roofe of her strong brazen towre
 Did raine into her lap an hony dew;
 The whiles her foolish garde, that litle knew
 Of such deceit, kept th' yron dore fast bar'd,
 And watcht that none should enter nor issew;
 Vaine was the watch, and bootlesse all the ward,
 Whenas the God to golden hew himselfe transfard.

Spenser not only describes pictures or tapestries, but also follows the painter's method in portraying imaginary persons and scenes. His descriptions of Belphebe, Lucifera, and Mercilla may be referred to as portraits. The stanzas depicting Belphebe press into their service shades of colour and distinctness of outlines and give the minutest details of her face, her eyes, her mouth, her looks and smiles, her arms and her dress. "There is scarcely a detail in

*F. Q. III. i. 36.

†F. Q. III. xi. 41.

all those stanzas that could not be expressed by a painter or sculptor, that does not remind us of the portraits or statues of Diana."

Her yellow lockes, crisped like golden wyre,
About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And, when the winde emongst them did inspyre,
They waved like a penon wyde dispred,
And low behinde her backe were scattered:
And, whether art it were or heedlesse hap,
As through the flouing forrest rash she fled,
In her rude heares sweet flowres themselves did lap,
And flourishing fresh leaves and blossomes did enwrap.*

Spenser often gives a whole vision in a single stanza, so that we have in a series of stanzas a rapid succession of a number of scenes, objects or situations which have a kaleidoscopic effect. The pictorial method is followed with equal success by Spenser in his allegories. The wedding of the Thames and the Medway is a good illustration. The rivers are transformed into human personages, either masculine or feminine, and this facilitates the application of the technique.)

Tapestry-weaving is also a mark of Spenser's art. But Spenser's style is full, wordy and copious, and his lines have not the thinness and brevity noticeable in others. Weaving is facilitated by these gossamer-like qualities of verse. Yet Spenser's long lines have a kind of tenuity, and he weaves tapestries with them even more skilfully than other pictorial poets, and minute details and variegated hues are well brought out by him. The figures of the Seven Deadly Sins are portrayed with an accuracy and realistic touch which are noticeable only in finished tapestries. Envy is thus depicted:

—malicious Envy rode
Upon a ravenous wolfe, and still did chaw
Between his cankred teeth a venemous tode,
That all the poison ran about his chaw;
But inwardly he chawed his owne maw
At neighbours welth, that made him ever sad,
For death it was, when any good he saw;
And wept, that cause of weeping none he had;
But when he heard of harme he waxed wondrous glad.†

Britomart, the symbol of chastity, stands before the astonished gaze of Artegall in the full glory of her womanly beauty when her

**F. Q.* II. iii. 30.

†*F. Q.* I. iv. 30

helmet is shattered by his blow. Her figure is rendered life-like in the following lines

..... her angels face, unseene afore,
Like to the ruddie morne appeard in sight,
Deawed with silver drops through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder than beseem'd aright,
Through toylesome heate and labour of her weary fight.
And round about the same her yellow heare,
Having through stirring loosd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare,
Framed in a goldsmithes forge with cunning hand;
Yet goldsmithes cunning could not understand
To frame such subtile wire, so shinie clear ;*

Word-painting, it has been pointed out, has never been undertaken by Spenser exclusively for its own sake. It is generally guided by the allegory. It is the predominance of the allegory that induces the comparison between Spenser's art and Rubens's. The creation of the monstrous figures of Error and the Blatant Beast can only be justified on allegorical grounds. The gorgeousness of the House of Pride and the simplicity of the House of Holiness are similarly suggested by their allegorical significance. The contrast between pride and purity is brought out in—

A stately Pallace built of squared brick,
Which cunningly was without mortar laid,
Whose wals were high, but nothing strong nor thick,
And golden foile all over them displaid,
That purest skye with brightnesse they dismaid :
High lifted up were many loftie towres,
And goodly galleries far over laid.....†

and

There was an auncient house nor far away,
Renowmd throughout the world for sacred lore
..... a spatious court they see,
Both plaine and pleasaunt to be walked in ;
Where them does meete a francklin faire and free,
And entertaines with comely courteous glee.....‡

and again in

High above all a cloth of State was spred,
And a rich throne, as bright as sunny day ;

*F. Q. IV. vi. 19 - 20.

†F. Q. I. iv. 4.

‡F. Q. I. x. 3 - 6,

On which there sate, most brave embellished
 With royall robes and gorgeous array,
 A mayden Queene that shone as Titans ray,
 In glistring gold and perelesse pretious stone ;
 Yet her bright blazing beautie did assay
 To dim the brightnesse of her glorious throne,
 As envying her selfe, that too exceeding shone :*

and

There they doe finde that godly aged Sire,
 With snowy lockes adowne his shoulders shed ;
 As hoary frost with spangles doth attire
 The mossy braunches of an Oke halfe ded.
 Each bone might through his body well be red
 And every sinew seene, through his long fast ;
 For naught he car'd his carcas long unfed ;
 His mind was full of spiritual repast,
 And pyn'd his flesh to keepe his body low and chast.†

The elaborateness of Spenser's imagery calls for notice. His portraits are full, and they are the outcome of the "grand style" which was characteristic of the Renaissance and is distinguishable from the piecemeal art of the medieval writers. Spenser may be contrasted with Chaucer in this respect, and his superiority may be traced to the development of painting and sculpture along with stagecraft in the fifteenth century. Chaucer gives slight touches, little comments or minute strokes of detail. Even his "larger pieces, like those of his original William de Lorris, are catalogues of massed particulars in which he runs breathlessly from item to item." Venus in the *Parliament of Fowls* is a mere summary sketch :—

Her gilte heres with a golden thred
 Y-bounden were, untrussed as she lay,
 And naked from the breste unto the heed
 Men might hir seen ; and sothly for to say,
 The remenaunt was well kevered to my pay,
 Right with a subtil kerchef of Valence,
 Ther nas no thikker cloth of no defence.

This may be contrasted with Spenser's exhaustive portrait of Acrasia whose beauty was a lure for the eye as for the soul :

Upon a bed of Roses she was layd,
 As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin ;
 And was arayd, or rather disarayd,

**F. Q. I. iv. 8.*

†*F. Q. I. x. 48.*

All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
 That hid no whit her alablaster skin,
 But rather shewd more white, if more might bee ;
 More subtile web Arachne cannot spin ;
 Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
 Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee.
 Her snowy brest was bare to ready spoyle
 Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild ;
 And yet, through languour of her late sweet toyle,
 Few drops, more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,
 That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild ;
 And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
 Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
 Fraile harts, yet quenched not : like starry light,
 Which, sparckling on the silent waves,

does seem more bright.*

Chaucer dismisses Venus as soon as she has served his purpose, and this is to present her figure as a principal in the festive pageant. But Spenser develops his portrait of Acrasia for its own sake with the utmost deliberation, "correlating every stroke, every figure, verbal or visual, in the execution of the whole." Readers must feel inclined to dwell on and admire it as a work of art, particularly because she takes a prominent part in the story, though they might, on moral grounds, dislike her as a sinister creature with infinite potentialities for evil.

Though a word-painter, Spenser has high regard for the art of poetry as such. His imagery is not intended merely to produce colour-effects. Generally it serves to illustrate some action or state of mind and is used in similes and metaphors, and therefore "admits only of such details as are requisite for the poetic effect" he has in view. The gold and silver that invariably adorn his pageantry are illuminants rather than pigments. To give an illustration,

His seahorses did seeme to snort amayne,
 And from their nosethrilles blow the brynie streame,
 That made the sparckling waves to smoke agayne,
 And flame with gold ; but the white fomy creame
 Did shine with silver, and shoot forth his beame.†

But on occasion Spenser does specify colours and emphasize them only to bring out the contrast. Words like red, crimson, scarlet, green, white, flax, snow etc., have association with definite

**F. Q.* II. xii. 77—78.

†*F. Q.* III. xi. 41.

objects, and they are copiously pressed into service in order to suggest variety :

—the pure snow, with goodly vermill stayne*
Like crimson dyde in grain ;
—deckt with blossoms dyde in white and red†
The greene shield dyde in dolorous vermeill.°
—in his silver shield

He bore a bloodie Crosse.....*
Seest how fresh my flowers bene spreadde,
Dyed in Lilly white and Cremsin redde,
With Leaves engrained in lusty greene ;
Colours meete to clothe a mayden Queene?***

Thus the poet has sometimes sheer description in the shape of pictorial images. As one critic says, "He cannot dispense with figures in representing even so simple a natural phenomenon as the time of day :"

.....'ayre Aurora from the deawy bed
Of aged Tithone gan herselfe to reare
With rosy cheekes, for shame as blushing red.††
Hyperion, throwing foorth his beames full hott,
Into the highest top of heaven gan clime,
And, the world parting by an equall lott,
Did shed his whirling flames on either side.°°

.....now the golden Hesperus
Was mounted high in top of heaven sheene,
And warnd his other brethren joyeous
To light their blessed lamps in Joves eternall hous.††

[The progress of the story and of the argument is constantly impeded by such decorative device, and none who has not ample leisure and enthusiasm for the ornamental in literature can really enjoy it.] Just before Guyon destroys the Bower of Bliss, and when the reader is eagerly waiting for the finale of the adventures of the Knight of Temperance, is introduced the colourful description of a painting on the gate of the Bower, representing a sea-scene from Homer :

*Epithalamion, L. 227.

†*F. Q.* II. xii. 12.

°*F. Q.* II. x. 24.

†*F. Q.* II. i. 18.

***Shep. Cal.* Feb, Ecl.

††*F. Q.* I. xi. 51.

°°*Virgils Gnat.*

††*F. Q.* III. iv. 51.

Ye might have seene the frothy billowes fry
 Under the ship as thorough them she went,
 That seemd the waves were into yvory,
 Or yvory into the waves were sent;
 And otherwhere the snowy substaunce sprent
 With vermell, like the boyes bloud therein shed,
 A piteous spectacle did represent;
 And otherwhiles, with gold besprinkeled,
 Yt seemd the enchanted flame, which did Creusa wed*

Similar diversion is created by pictorial poetry in the Book of Chastity (Bk. III of the *Faerie Queene*) where Britomant enters the House of Busirane, the magician whose wicked charms are powerless against her and who is soon to be vanquished by her. The fight is imminent, but the poet leisurely treats the reader to a feast of colours and outlines :

.....round about the walls yclothed were
 With goodly arras of great majesty,
 Woven with gold and silke, so close and nere,
 That the rich metall lurked privily,
 As faining to be hidd from envious eye;
 Yet here, and there, and everywhere unwares
 It shewd itselfe, and shone unwillingly;
 Like a discolourd snake, whose hidden snares
 Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht
backe declares.

And in those Tapets weren fashioned
 Many faire pourtraicts, and many a faire feate;
 And all of love, and al of lusty-hed,
 As seemed by their semblaunt, did entreat;
 And eke all Cupids warres they did repeate,
 And cruell battailes, which he whilome fought
 Gainst all the Gods to make his empire great.....

Spenser's descriptions, generally pictorial, are also sculptural at times. Acrasia amidst her paramours and Amoret in the lap of Womanhood encircled by the Graces are illustrations of statuesque outline and rhythm. The mighty concourse of lovers hymning the Queen of Beauty is thus portrayed :

Thus sate they all around in seemely rate;
 And in the midst of them a goodly mayd
 Even in the lap of Womanhood there sate,
 The which was all in lilly white arayd,

*F. Q. II. xii. 45.

With silver streames amongst the linnen stray'd;
 Like to the Morne, when first her shyning face
 Hath to the gloomy world itselfe bewray'd:
 That same was fayrest Amoret in place,
 Shyning with beauties light and heavenly vertues grace.*
 The portrait of Acrasia is naturally different:

Upon a bed of Roses she was layd,
 As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant Sin;
 And was arrayd, or rather disarayd,
 All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
 That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
 But rather shewd more white, if more might bee.[°]

... ..
 The young man, sleeping by her, seeme I to be
 Some goodly swayne of honorable place,
 That certes it great pitty was to see
 Him his nobility so fowle to deface :^{°°}

... ..
 His warlike Armes, the ydle instruments
 Of sleeping praise, were hong upon a tree;
 And his brave shield, full of old moniments,
 Was fowly ras't that none the signes might see.**

The Amoretti deals with love—with subtle elaborations of the theme as well as its embellishments. The reflections on love are suggested partly by Petrarchism and partly by Platonism traceable to the *Symposium* and to the manuals of Platonism written copiously in Italy in the sixteenth century. These inspired French sonneteers like those of *La Pleiade* school, and possibly in a new form cast their reflection also on the poetry of Donne and his school. Though *The Amoretti* is full of subtleties and abstruse points except where Petrarchism comes in, this sonnet-cycle as a whole can hardly be placed in the category of metaphysical poetry. Notions and hints borrowed from Petrarch, Tasso and the French sonneters and from the manuals of Platonism are developed by Spenser into elaborate and charming pictorial imagery, and the interest of the sonnets "centres not so much upon the flux of mind, emotion or concept which marks the beginning of the poetic effort, as on the images suggested by the lover's state." To take sonnet no. XXVI, where the central idea which has been developed into an

*F. Q. IV. x. 52.

°F. Q. II. xii. 77.

°°F. Q. II. xii. 79.

**F. Q. II. xii. 80.

image of variegated hues is the cruelty of the beloved :
Sweet is the Rose, but growes upon a brere;
Sweet is the Junipere, but sharpe his bough;
Sweet is the Eglantine, but pricketh nere;
Sweet is the Firbloome, but his braunch is rough.
Sweet is the Cypresse, but his rynd is tough, etc.

In Sonnet XXII, Mariolatry is the source of the picture of the temple and religious service :

This holy season, fit to fast and pray,
Men to devotion ought to be inclynd :
Therefore, I lykewise, on so holy day,
For my sweet Saynt some service fit will find.
Her temple fayre is built within my mind,
In which her glorious Image placed is;
On which my thoughts doo night and day attend,
Lyke sacred priests that never thinke amisse.
There I to her as, th'author of my blisse,
Will builde an altar to appease her yre;
And on the same my hart will sacrificise,
Burning in flames of pure and chaste desire.

Here is also some proof of Spenser's appreciation of Catholic rituals in spite of his ardent Protestantism. The images in the church, its gorgeous decoration, pealing music and splash of colours strongly attracted the poet. The stanzas on the Temple of Venus are reminiscent of image-worship in the Catholic Church, and illustrate once more the blending of the pictorial and the sculptural in Spenser's work :

Into the inmost Temple thus I came,
Which fuming all with frankensence I found
And odours rising from the altars flame.
Upon an hundred marble pillors round
The roofe up high was reared from the ground,
All deckt with crownes, and chaynes, girlands gay,
... ..
An hundred Altars round about were set,
All flaming with their sacrifices fire,
That with the steme thereof the Temple swet,
Which rould in clouds to heaven did aspire,
And in them bore true lovers vowes entire :
And eke an hundred brasen caudrons bright,
To bath in joy and amorous desire,
Every of which was to a damzell hight ;

For all the Priests were damzels in soft linnen dight.
 Right in the midst the Goddesse selfe did stand
 Upon an altar of some costly masse,
 Whose substance was uneath to understand :
 For neither pretious stone, nor durefull brasse,
 Nor shining gold, nor mouldring clay it was ;
 But much more rare and pretious to esteeme,
 Pure in aspect, and like to christall glasse;
 Yet glasse was not, if one did rightly deeme ;
 But, being faire and brickle, likest glasse did seeme
 But it in shape and beautie did excell
 All other Idoles which the heathen adore,
 Farre passing that, which by surpassing skill
 Phidias did make in Paphos Isle of yore,
 And all about her necke and shoulders flew
 A flocke of little loves, and sports, and joyes,
 With nimble wings of gold and purple hew ;
 Whose shapes seem'd not like to terrestriall boyes,
 But like to Angels playing heavenly toyes*.....

Prof. Davis says, "Spenser's use of metaphor is not merely conventional. It springs from the inner recesses of a poetic consciousness that instinctively transforms all perception to symbolic representation. It extends from simple verbal figure to complex visual imagery. In the universal game of make-believe the role of the poet is abandoned for one livelier and more picturesque. He is a ploughman resting his team, or turning them back to a neglected furrow, a mariner gladly beholding the port, striking sail, landing his passengers and leaving his ship in harbour for repair." The critic illustrates his point by referring to Britomart who, "lamenting the hopelessness of her quest, consoles herself by weaving a tissue of metaphor, a supplication for rescue from the tempest that tosses her feeble bark:"

For els my feeble vessell, crazd and crackt
 Through thy strong buffets and outrageous blowes,
 Cannot endure, but needes it must be wrackt
 On the rough rocks, or on the sandy shallowes,
 The whiles that love it steres, and fortune rowes :
 Love, my lewd Pillott, hath a restless minde ;
 And fortune, Boteswaine, no assurance knowes ;
 But saile withouten starres gainst tyde and winde :
 How can they other doe, sith both are bold and blinde**

*F. Q., IV. x.

**F. Q., III. iv. 9.

The gorgeous pageantry in *Epithalamion* has a similar origin, and is almost of the same nature as the imagery of *The Amoretti* though the former is concerned not with abstruse and metaphysical subtleties but with a concrete fact, not with the varying emotions and mental tension that accompany courtship, but with the celebration of a marriage festival. It is really a nuptial hymn. But the circumstances following the marriage are sublimated into a series of pictures glorious in their sensuousness and suggestion of felicity.

Hast thee, O fayrest Planet, to thy home,
Within the Westernne fome :
Thy tyred steedes long since have need of rest.
Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,
And the bright evening star with golden creast
Appeare out of the East.
Fayre childe of beauty, glorious lampe of love !
That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,
And guydest lovers through the nightes sad dread,
How chearefully thou lookest from above,
And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light,
As joying in the sight
Of these glad many, which for joy do sing,
That all the woods them answer, and their echo ring.
... ..
Now bring the bryde into the brydall houres.
Now night is come, now soon her disaray,
And in her bed her lay ;
Lay her in lillies and in violets,
And silken courteins over her display,
And odour sheetes, and Arras coverlets.
Behold how goodly my faire love does ly
In prodd humility !
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her took,
In Tempe lying on the flowry gras,
'Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was,
With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.

A picturesque and variegated procession—an array of guests, bridegroom and bridesmaids at the marriage of the Thames and the Medway—is again the theme of Canto XI of Book IV of the *Faerie Queene*. Their number is large, and thus there is greater scope for graphic description. Spenser introduces as much variety as possible in respect of hues, outlines of form and association. Classical myths and local legends are exhaustively drawn upon, and the

tour de force certainly is absolutely adventitious. The length of the description is abnormal, and really creates a diversion. Only the melody of Spenser's verse and the variety of impressions redeem the performance from monotony and intolerable prolixity.

[The extended epic simile provides Spenser with an opportunity of indulging in decorative and pictorial description. It was borrowed from classical poets and their Italian imitators and naturalised first in English poetry by Spenser. It generally tried to explain the action of heroes—fights, attacks etc.—by reference to ordinary incidents and to illustrate abstract things, feelings and ideas by comparison with concrete objects. Hence, “the simile offers a means of escape from shadow to substance and of fitful awakening from the poet's dream to the realities of work-a-day existence.” Spenser in the *Faerie Queene* deals with the events and personages of fairy land and with an unreal world utterly beyond the domain of human experience.] Their nature is clarified when there are found some parallels to them within the range of man's knowledge. “We have met no one but an outlandish knight, with a mysterious veiled mistress, and a loathly monster, with her more loathly brood. But suddenly the phantasmagoria is lifted, when an unexpected glimpse of ‘old Father Nilus’, of ‘gentle shepherded in sweete eventide’ gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. The myth of Diana and Faunus, encircled by the even less substantial pageant of cosmic beings preparing for the trial of Mutability, is forgotten at the sight of a housewife catching a beast in the act of despoiling her pans of cream.” Similarly when False Florimell fades into nothing, the poet explains this wonder by saying :

As when the daughter of Thaumantes faire
Hath in the watry cloud displayed wide
Her goodly bow, which paints the liquid ayre,
That all men wonder at her colours pride ;
All suddenly, ere one can looke aside,
The glorious picture vanisheth away,
Ne any token doth thereof abide.....*

Summer drought is graphically described with the help of the following simile :

Like as in sommers day, when raging heat
Doth burne the earth and boyled rivers drie,
That all brute beasts, forst to refraine fro meat,

**F. Q.*, V. iii. 25.

Doe hunt for shade, where shrowded they may lie,
And, missing it, faine from themselves to flie ;
All travellers tormented are with paine :
A watry cloud doth overcast the skie,
And poureth forth a sudden shoure of raine,
That all the wretched world recomforteth againe.*

LECTURE IV

Keats and Tennyson

[LITERARY reminiscence plays a large part in Keats's poetry, and actually inspires his poetic faculty to a very considerable extent. Keats was young when his career of authorship began; he had not any opportunity of previously preparing himself for his destined work. He could not assimilate his readings, and these had not settled in his consciousness before his creative activity began. Study and composition went together in Keats's case,—scholarly and creative activities were almost synchronous. In consequence the reflection—sometimes dim and sometimes comparatively clear—of the work of other and older authors is very common in his work.) As pointed out by Amy Lowell, "His reading had always been of the impressionistic order. To receive impressions, not to tabulate facts, was his aim, and it is the wisest aim for a budding poet. Not until the poetical view-point is so firmly fixed as to become a dependable habit, can youth engage in a long conscious preparation of detail before starting to write. It may sound paradoxical, but it is a truth that Keats had to write; and it would have been an ill-judged move on his part to have held off from actual writing for any preparation whatsoever."*

This explains his preference for mythological subjects and his imitation of *motifs* and even of style and imagery. [In mythology there is attractive literary treatment as there is an appeal to imagination—it is not a mere string of facts. There are ample materials for producing an impression on the sensitive mind.] Mythology had therefore captivated Keats's mind even in his school-days. He knew Lemprière almost by heart and was familiar with Sandys's translation of Ovid, while his interest in Elizabethan poetry was intensified by its classical subjects and references. [His imitation of Spenser is largely to be accounted for by the charm which romance and mythology cast on Keats.]

[Keats's poetry also bears the reflection of Spenser's in its sensuousness and it casts its shadow on that of the pre-Raphærites and of Tennyson. It has of course, been suggested that Keats tried at first to imitate not Spenser but the Spenserians—the diction of Drayton, Fletcher and Browne, the seventeenth century Spenserians,

*(*John Keats* Vol. I., p. 317)

of Thomson and the eighteenth century Spenserians, of Leigh Hunt and Felton Mathew, the nineteenth-century Spenserians, and that his style approximated to Spenser's only later. But it was Spenser's poetry that had unsealed the springs of poetic inspiration in Keats.] The story of his introduction to Spenser is given by his mentor Clarke who read to him the *Epithalamion* one afternoon in October, 1813. Clarke says, "That night he took away with him the first volume of the *F. Q.* and he went through it, as I formerly told his noble biographer, as a young horse would through a spring meadow—ramping." Browne says, "It was the *F. Q.* that awakened his genius" and *Imitation of Spenser* was the outcome early in 1814.

[Spenser's poetry had a threefold merit. Spenser was a singer, a word-painter and also a teacher. The Titian or the Rubens of the poets was also a better teacher than Aquinas or Scotus. The singer of pastoral life and of heroes' high endeavours was also a sage philosopher. Keats's obligation did not cover Spenser's moral fervour and nobility of sentiment, for the emotional qualities of Spenser were transformed in Keats into a sort of sweet sentimentality. But his sensuousness and music have undoubtedly left their traces in Keatsian poetry. It has, however, to be pointed out that Keats's poetry is not analysable, like Spenser's, into constituent elements. Keats was, in Lowell's words, "altogether poet." His whole being identified itself with the momentary object of his sense-experience, and he felt it as part of himself; "poetry was his very existence, not merely his employment" as in the case of Wordsworth or a means of imparting moral truth as in the case of Spenser. Keats's music and sensuousness are inextricably intertwined—particularly in his later poetry—with imagination which, as has been pointed out, cannot really conflict with morality or high spirituality.]

[Keats, according to Lowell, was "over-languaged at first; but in this was implied the possibility of falling back to the perfect mean of diction". The mean was attained in his *Odes* where he renounced his allegiance to Spenser whose abundance and luxuriance he had been imitating in his earlier work. "He (Spenser) spends himself in a careless abundance only to be justified by incomes of immortal youth." This splendid superfluity of Spenser finds expression in the very structure of his verse which trails along.]

Pictorial description is a manifestation of such *abundance* in Keats as in Spenser. It is as if the poet frees himself from the swift current of the narrative and makes sketches in a leisurely fashion,

which form no part of the narrative itself and the beauty of which too can be enjoyed only with a quieter mind. Keats writes to Taylor, "First I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity". This *excess* for which Keats was indebted to Spenser, includes pictorial representation.

[The pictorial in Keats has passed through different stages. At first Keats's method is impressionistic. He does not give details in clear outline, but presents a series of flashing images suggested by Spenser.] For example, in the very first stanza of *Imitation of Spenser* occurs this luscious description of murmuring streams flowing through flower-beds, with bowers on their banks:

Now Morning from her orient chamber came,
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill;
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill;
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
And after parting beds of simple flowers,
By many streams a little lake did fill,
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

The picture of the dawn in the first line was possibly suggested by the following lines from the *Færie Queene* :—

Now when the rosy-fing' red Morning faire,
Weary of aged Tithones saffron bed,
Had spred her purple robe through deawy airee,
And the high hills Titan discovered.....

The next few lines of the extract from Keats probably derived the phrasing from Spenser's sketch of the Bower of Bliss* such as

Infinitt streames continually did well
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
The which into an ample laver fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
That like *a litle lake* it seemd to bee.....

and also

And all the margent round about was sett
With shady Laurell trees ††† ... †

The picture is indistinct, and this is due to the fact that it all depends on Keats's reminiscences of Spenser and is not prompted by his own personal experience. It is probably lacking in freshness

**F. Q.*, II. xii.

†*F. Q.*, II. xii. l. xiii.

and spontaneity also. But it has little in common with modern impressionistic poetry, though dim and blurred impressions form its basis.

Keats's *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem* and *Calidore* also reveal pictorial qualities imitated from Spenser. They are, as in the passages from *Imitation of Spenser*, based on impressions derived from study, not from direct visual observation, nor are they suggested by imagination, as the following passages would show:—

Lo ! I must tell a tale of chivalry ;
For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye.
Not like the formal crest of latter days :
But bending in a thousand graceful ways ;
So graceful, that it seems no mortal hand,
Or e'en the touch of Archimago's wand,
Could charm them into such an attitude.

* * * * *

Lo ! I must tell a tale of chivalry ;
For while I muse, the lance points slantingly
Athwart the morning air : some lady sweet,
Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet,
From the worn top of some old battlement
Hails it with tears, her stout defender sent :
And from her own pure self no joy dissembling,
Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling.

* * * * *

Green tufted islands casting their soft shades
Across the lake ; sequester'd leafy glades,
That through the dimness of their twilight show
Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow
Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems
Of delicate birch-trees, or long grass which hems
A little brook.

{ Pictorial poetry in Keats includes, besides imitation of descriptive passages, (1) representation of pictures in verse, and (2) reproduction of the prominent characteristics of pictures like colour effects and punctuation of details such as are particularly noticeable in pre-Raphælite paintings. The latter involves the use of the pictorial method in poetry.

Leigh Hunt's influence possibly misled Keats's creative genius and prevented it from asserting itself freely. Imitation of the

Spenserians can also be partly explained by Keats's dependence on Hunt's literary advice. But Keat's love of painting also originated in Hunt's company. Hunt was a lover of the fine arts, though it is doubtful how far he really appreciated them. The walls of his study were adorned with prints of famous pictures and busts of poets and patriots of old, and Keats, who was a frequent visitor, evidently surveyed these with delight.] This is reflected in his description of Hunt's study in *Sleep and Poetry* which he wrote one day after a symposium with Hunt held in the study itself. The prints have been identified by Sir Sidney Colvin as prints of Raphaël's *Poetry* in the Vatican of Rome, Poussin's *Empire of Flora*, *Bacchanals* and *Venus and Adonis* and Stotherd's *Bathers*, *Vintage* and *Petrarch and Laura*. In the passages quoted below the influence of the prints in Hunt's Study is noticeable :—

Then there rose to view a fane
Of liny marbles, and thereto a train
Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward :
One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward
The dazzling sunrise : two sisters sweet
Bending their graceful figures till they meet
Over the trippings of a little child :
And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild
The long liquidity of dewy piping.
See in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs ;—
A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims
At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion
With the subsiding crystal : as when ocean
Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er
Its rocky marge, and balances once more
The patient weeds ; that now unshent by foam
Feel all about their undulating home.

Keats was also indebted to the painter Haydon for an opportunity of seeing specimens of good painting better than those in Hunt's study where there were only re-prints. In Haydon's studio he saw original drawings and paintings by one of the most reputed artists of his time.

[The inspiration derived by Spenser from the master-pieces of painting in Lord Leicester's London residence came to Keats partly from Hunt's study and Haydon's studio.]

Endymion also bears traces of Keats's impressionistic studies in the domain of mythology. And it has been suggested that *Endymion* has laid under contribution ideas which Keats had somewhat haltingly tried to express in *Sleep and Poetry* and *I Stood Tip-toe*. The nature of Keats's word-painting is also influenced by the media through which the Endymion legend reached Keats. It is believed that Michael Drayton's handling of the legend in his *Endimion and Phæbe* and *The Man in the Moon* actually captivated Keats's imagination. Sir Sidney Colvin is convinced that the plot of *Endymion* owed a lot to *The Man in the Moone*. There are also close parallels between Keats's *Endymion* and Drayton's *Endimion and Phæbe* which would justify the inference of borrowing by Keats.*

The first few lines of *Endymion* contain a philosophico-lyrical outburst which, according to Sir Sidney Colvin, belonged to the earlier period of Keats's authorship.† But there is in it a maturity of thought which must be of later origin. The lines were composed in Carisbrooke before Keats had removed to Margate to write the poem. Nature-painting in them is more realistic and less vague and less bookish *i.e.*, less dependent on impressions derived from study. Keats, according to one critic, was here "painting an exact picture of his surroundings at the moment of writing." The beauties of Carisbrooke thus suggested the picturesqueness of the lines :—

.....each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own valleys : so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests ; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk.‡

[The subsequent passages covering the remaining portion of the poem reveal again Keats's bookishness - the dim impression of the beauties of nature borrowed from or suggested by his readings.] Mount Latmus where Endimion, the shepherd, lives, is thus described by Drayton in *Endimion and Phæbe* :

Vpon this Mount there stood a stately Groue
Whose reaching armes to clip the Welkin Stroue,

*(The question of plagiarism is dealt with in Amy Lowell's *John Keats*, Vol. I., pp. 323-46.)

†Amy-Lowell. *John Keats*, Vol. I., p. 341.

Of tufted Cedars, and the branching Pine,
 Whose bushy tops themselves doe so intwine,
 As seem'd when Nature first this work begun
 She then conspir'd against the piercing sun ;

Keats's delineation of Latmos in *Endymion* closely resembles Drayton's :

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
 A mighty forest ; for the moist earth fed
 So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
 Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.
 And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
 Where no man went..... ;

Who could tell

The freshness of the space of heaven above,
 Edg'd round with dark tree tops ?

The description of fountains in Drayton—

Out of thys soyle sweet bubling Fountains crept,
 As though for joy the sencelesse stones had wept,
 With straying channels dauncing sundry wayes,

... ..

Which breaking forth the tender grasse bedewed—
 can be paralleled by a shorter passage from *Endymion*, which runs thus :

.....Cold springs had run
 To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass.

Phœbe as nymph is arrayed in a mantle in Drayton's *Endimion and Phbæe* when she appears in the grove at the top of the moutain. The mantle is thus described :

An Azur'd Mantle purfled with a vaile,
 Which in the Ayre puft like a swelling saile,
 Embosted Rayne-bowes did appeare in silk,
 With waue streames as white as mornings Milk ;
 Which euer as the gentle Ayre did blow,
 Still with the motion seem'd to ebb and flow.

Drayton's imagery appears to have suggested the following picture of the mantle in Keats's *Endymion* :

.....The wind out-blows
 Her scarf into a fluttering pavillion ;

'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies.

In course of the wooing by Phœbe, Endimion sits on a moonlit bank at night longing for the vanished nymph, who does not appear till dawn when the moon is no longer in the sky. Phœbe finds Endimion asleep, and when she wakes him up, he makes love to her in words which have suggested Keats's. Drayton's lines are

My vitall spirit receues his spirit from thee,
Thou art that all which ruleth all in me :
Thou art the sap and life whereby I liue,
Which powerfull vigor doost receiue and giue ;
Thou nourishest the flame wherein I burne,
The North whereto my harts true tuch doth turne.

Keats reproduces Drayton's conception with additional poetic imagery but with less intellectual and emotional coherence in Book III of *Endymion*. Endymion says to Phoebe :—

.....thou wast the deep glen ;
Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—
The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun ;
Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won ;
Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my steed—
My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed :—
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon !
O what a wild and harmonized tune
My spirit struck from all the beautiful .

[Keats came to the Isle of Wight in the middle of April in 1817 and spent about a week at Carisbrooke where he had with him Spenser's and Shakespeare's works. He had been reading Shakespeare's plays with Haydon earlier in the year, and at Carisbrooke Keats strained his physical and intellectual faculties in reading these again and in preparing for the composition of *Endymion*. Haydon writes to him about this time: "God bless you, my dear Keats ; do not despair ; collect incident, study character, read Shakespeare and trust in Providence." Keats replied (on May 11, 1817): "I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare—indeed I shall, I think, never read any other book much.....I am very near agreeing with Hazlitt that Shakespeare is enough for us." This zest for Shakespeare led to a change in Keats's style which up till now had borne traces of the teachings of Hunt relating to the excellence

of eighteenth century poetry. His sonnet *On the Sea*, written at Carisbrooke suggests an impression of the coast as seen from the Dover cliff in *King Lear*.] Keats wrote to Reynolds that the passage in *Lear*—"Do you not hear the sea?"—haunted him day and night. This and details like 'idle pebbles,' 'the murmuring surge' etc. were responsible for the magnificent painting in the passage

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores—and in its mighty swell,
Gluts twice ten thousand caverns—till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be lightly moved, from where it sometime fell,
When last the winds of heaven were unbound.

[The influence of Shakespeare has to be emphasised in view of the opportunity which Keats had of relying on and incorporating his personal experience of the hilly sea-coast at Shanklin. In the letter he wrote to Reynolds on April 17, Keats quoted the sonnet and described the occasion of its composition. "Shanklin is a most beautiful place—sloping wood and meadow ground reaches round the Chine, which is a cleft between the cliffs of the depth of nearly 300 feet at least. This cleft is filled with trees and bushes in the narrow part, and as it widens becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side, which spread to the very verge of the sea, and some fishermen's huts on the other, perched midway in the Ballustrades of beautiful green Hedges along their steps down to the sands—But the sea, Jack, the sea—the little waterfall—then the white cliff—then St. Catherine's Hill—'the sheep in the meadows, the cows in the corn.'" It is evident that none of the charms of this description finds a place in the sonnet. Keats transcends the concrete impressions recorded in his letter and also those in *King Lear*, and gives only a vague idea of the magnificent prospect—paints a universal sea whispering eternally and beating against the coast-line.]

[The early poetry of Keats, written under the influence of Hunt, is supposed to have what are called 'Cockney qualities'. These include, apart from colloquial idioms, triviality and sentimentality, prettiness and a certain narrowness in the outlook on Nature. He notices and gives prominence to petty aspects of scenery and landscape. In his later poetry *e.g.*, in *Hyperion* "which represents the extreme point in Keats's reaction" against eighteenth-century style, there is elevation of diction including free flight of imagination,

vastness of conception grandeur and sublimity. The influence of Milton is, of course, clear. It not only manifests itself, as Prof. de Sélincourt points out, in the adoption of devices like repetition, inversion, use of the English or classical characteristics in figures of speech and structure of sentences; it also alters Keats's delineation of Nature's beauty. It gives him the power to draw upon those huge and rugged landscapes more congenial to the expanding range of his mind, which he encountered in his northern wanderings. He conjures up visions of vast forests and valleys—as distinct from trim gardens, bowers and ponds—of tall trees, large sections of the skyey vault, extensive areas in space and mighty, colossal size and form. These are not limited to lifeless natural objects merely, but are associated with legendary and mythological figures symbolising power and passion.] Keats accordingly uses long similes of the classical or Miltonic type. The effect of Saturn's speech to Thea in *Hyperion* is thus painted :

As when, upon a tranced Summer-night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the Silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
So came these words and went.....

Asia in the den of the defeated Titans, is presented against a panoramic background :—

More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory,
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.

Reminiscences of Milton and Shakespeare appear in Keats's later as in his earlier poetry, and words and phrases from them are used in abundance. Their impression in his later work, however, is not as dim or diffuse as in the earlier. The borrowings in the later work of Keats are small quantitatively, and their defects are redeemed by vastness of conception and the sweep of the lengthy similes. To take Keats's line on the lonely valley to which Saturn retired after his defeat :—

Deep in the shady Sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,

Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
 Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
 Still as the silence round about his lair ;
 Forest on forest hung about his head
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
 Not so much life as on a summer's day
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
 A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
 By reason of his fallen divinity
 Spreading a shade ;

In Keats's copy of *Paradise Lost* the following passage was marked*—

Or have ye chosen this place
 After the toil of battle to repose
 Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
 To slumber here, as in the vales of heaven ?

This reminded him of another passage in Milton describing the vale into which a group of fallen angels retreated, and in an annotation he observed :

"There is a cool pleasure in the very sound of vale. The English word is of the happiest chance. Milton has put vales in heaven and hell with the very utter affection and yearning of a great Poet. It is.....a beautiful thing made more beautiful by being reflected and put in a Mist". It is clear that Keats derived his image of a shady, leafy, silent and pensive valley from Milton. If he had tried to reproduce only the borrowed material, probably we should have had an indistinct reflection of it, a blurred impression. But his autograph manuscript which is a second draft shows that he made repeated corrections and at last achieved unrivalled pictorial perfection which derived its excellence also from the elevated style. The eighth and ninth verses originally read thus :—

Not so much life as what an eagle's wing
 Would spread upon a field of green ear'd corn.

But Keats discerned that the fierce energy in the phrase "eagle's wing" and the vivid colour in "green ear'd corn" destroyed the harmony of the sensuous effect which he was striving to produce. He altered "an eagle's wing" into "a young vulture's wing." As this could not remove the images of energy and colour, he later changed the lines into

**The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 512.

Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not at all the dandelion's fleece.

It has been surmised that the last line was suggested by the passage from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (I. iii. 316) :

—“the seeded pride
That hath to this maturity blowne up
In ranke Achilles must or now be cropt,
Or, shedding, breed a Nursery of like evil
To over-bulke us all.”*

“The image of the dandelion, through association, recalled Shakespeare's image of “seeded Pride”. Ultimately he shook himself free from hazy suggestions and achieved clarity in the lines published in the text of 1820.

viz., Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass.

Keats's delineation of Saturn's figure shows how he improved on his sources to achieve pictorial effect. He derived the general appearance and posture of the god from classical sources, where he is represented as an old man with a long white beard, bent, dejected and paled, with a veiled head and grey complexion. Lemprière says, “The god is generally represented as an old man bent through age and infirmity.” Keats writes :

Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

[The palace of the sun-god Hyperion in Keats is magnificent, and the splash of strong colours is gorgeous. Dimness and shade associated with the valley, have disappeared. There is no half-light, and no silence reigns over the pile. Keats had hints at the beginning of the second book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, but they have been worked up with superior wit, and the gold which adorns the palace is the only common element.] The difference is obvious between Ovid's passage

Sol's loftie Palace on high Pillars rais'd,
Shone all with gold, and stones that flamelike
blaz'd (Sandys's Translation.)

*Keats had observed in an annotation on this passage in his own copy ; “One's very breath while leaning over these pages is held for fear of blowing this line away— as easily as the gentlest breeze robs dandelions of their fleecy crowns.” (Finney, *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 514).

and Keats's

His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and tiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angerly : while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place ; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.

The canvas is larger and the picture fuller. The grandeur of the scene and of the structure is heightened. The sculptural has supplemented the pictorial. Three-dimensional objects have been freely and copiously introduced to add impressiveness and dignity. Keats here tries to revive not only visual memory, but also the memory of muscular effort.

The double appeal is more effective. Keats's representation of the voluminous and the statuesque in poetry may have been due to the influence of Milton whose imagination loved large dimensions—vast and colossal objects in Heaven and Hell. But it has to be traced to his contact with Haydon as its origin.

[After the extravagant episode of the wearing of the laurel crown by Hunt, Keats was induced by Haydon the painter to withdraw from Hunt's coterie. Keats had by now become an admirer of Haydon whose article concerning the genuineness of the Elgin marbles had attracted his attention. He wrote a Sonnet to Haydon and visited his studio where the painter showed him sketches and paintings and the casts of the Elgin marbles. Haydon took him to the British Museum to see the Elgin marbles of which only the casts could be seen in Haydon's studio. These experiences of Keats had much to do with the quality and nature of his later poetic images.]

It may be supposed that apart from other reasons the beauty and symmetry of the Elgin marbles produced in Keats a love of the sculptural. Keats was not only pictorial, but also statuesque. "Each image is thrown up rounded and whole as a physical creation, with subjective interpretations lending depth."* The images sink to the earth and are immobile and voluminous. Stateliness rather than rhythmical grace is their main mark. Keats's imagination was transported to the dream-land of the "medieval and the classic spirit-world

**The Starlit Dome*, p. 159.

in their thousand-columned caverns of myriad-reflecting stalactite and other crystal-line formations." The description of the underground wanderings of Endymion reveals Keats's love of gigantic forms in their motionless pose :

..... the metal woof,
Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof
Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss,
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
Fancy into belief : anon it leads
Through winding passages, where sameness breeds
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change ;
Whether to silver grotts, or giant range
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
Athwart a flood of crystal.

This passage invites comparison with Spenser's picture of the Cave of Mammon:—

That houses forme within was rude and strong,
Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,
From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hong
Emboist with massy gold of glorious guifte,
And rich with metall loaded every rifte
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threatt.

The sculptural ultimately resolves itself into the pictorial in poetic description. Though colour-effects may be wanting, the outline or the shape can certainly be represented in words. The pictorial in Keats's poetry is enriched by the voluminous with its symmetry and its finish.

[It has been remarked that Keats "is definitely earthy and arboreal rather than ethereal." He differs along with Spenser from Shelley who is aerial, and buoyant in his lyric flight. Keats smells of the earth, as it were, and his poetry is the "poetry of vegetation and greenh," "of strange jungly over-growths, of murmurous pines and drowsy hemlocks." It feels the breath of organic nature and reflects its varied appeal to the senses. Spenser resembles Keats here, though he does not go to extremes like the latter. His sensitiveness does not border on the morbid as Keats's does.] Lusciousness is not so prominent in the Elizabethan poet as in the Georgian. For purposes of comparison reference may be made to two passages from the two poets on almost identical themes.) The following is the description of the bower where Adonis lay asleep in *Endymion* :

Above his head,
 Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
 To make a coronal ; and round him grew
 All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
 Together intertwined and trammelled fresh :
 The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,
 Shading its Ethiop berries ; and woodbine,
 Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;
 Convolvulus in streaked vases flush ;
 The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush ;
 And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;
 With others of the sisterhood.

This is modelled on Spenser's picture of the bower in the Garden of Adonis in Canto VI of Bk. III of the *Faerie Queene*, where Venus used to meet her beloved :

There was a pleasaunt Arber, not by art
 But of the trees owne inclination made,
 Which knitting their rancke braunches, part to part,
 With wanton yvie twine entrayld athwart,
 And Eglantine and Caprifole emong,
 Fashion'd above within their inmost part,

...

And all about grew every sort of flowre,
 To which sad lovers were transformed of yore ;
 Fresh Hyacinthus, Phoebus paramoure
 and dearest love ;
 Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore ;
 Sad Amaranthus, made a flowre but late,
 Sad Amaranthus, in whose purple gore
 Me seemes I see Amintas wretched fate,
 To whom sweet Poets verse hath given endlesse date.

In one sense Keats has been able to improve upon his master.

[*The Eve of St. Agnes* is supposed to represent the quintessence of sensuousness and is "spontaneous expression of Keats's genius, springing like Pallas Athene full-grown"*from the head of Zeus. The intuition and composition of the romance were sudden, spontaneous, and rapid.] Yet the pictorial effect of the following is exquisite :—

A casement high and triple -arch'd there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries

*Finney: *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, Vol. II., pp. 540-41

Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings ;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and
 kings.

Full on this easement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint ;
 She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
 Save wings, for heaven :

The images are as clear as possible and visual impression is recalled faithfully—although the poet has made a technical mistake in giving 'the wintry moon' the colour-potency of full sunlight.

Some of the phrases and verses in the poem are reminiscent of Shakespeare, Dante, Coleridge and Browne, the author of *Britannia's Pastorals*. Describing Riot's transformation in the House of Repentance, Browne wrote :—

And as a lovely maiden, pure and chaste,
 With naked iv'ry neck, and gown unlac'd,
 Within her chamber, when the day is fled,
 Makes poor her garments to enrich her bed ;
 First, puts she off her lily-silken gown,
 That shrinks for sorrow as she lays it down ;
 And with her arms graceth a waistcoat fine,
 Embracing her as it would ne'er untwine.
 Her flaxen hair, ensnaring all beholders,
 She next permits to wane about her shoulders,
 And though she cast it back, the silken slips
 Still forward steal and hang upon her lips

[Keats refined Browne's rough ore into pure gold and stamped it with the impression of his own genius. He transformed it into superior substance and in his hand it suffered a " sea-change " into " something rich and strange " ; and we have the following lines on the disrobing of Madeline :)

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
 Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;
 Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;
 Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea weed,
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
 In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

In regard to his borrowings from Shakespeare and Coleridge, Keats elaborates and develops their little hints and suggestions, and gives fuller pictures. The inspiration to the composition of *The Eve of St. Agnes* came from a variety of sources, e.g., Coleridge's *Christabel*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene*. Sensuousness borrowed from Spenser's description of the Bower of Bliss is punctuated by the electric passion of *Romeo and Juliet* from which is also derived the background of family feud and bitter hatred. *Christabel* contributes the magic charm of the metrical romances of the middle ages which are also responsible for the theme of Catholic devotion, the beadsman and the penance as well as carouse and revelry. The impression of bitter cold is vividly expressed through the owl, the hare, the flock in woolly fold. All these combine to make up the unique appeal of the poem. They supplement the purely pictorial element.

[Similarly the poem derives a large part of its artistic value from the combination of the effects of different sensations. This is achieved through the revival of the memory of all kinds of sense-experience. Poetry, it has been said, "Stimulates directly auditory sensations, and because of the association of sensations with words (known as the law of association) it stimulates images of all possible sensations." *The Eve of St. Agnes* revives images of "Sensations of sight, hearing, touch, temperature, pressure, taste, smell, motor sensations, and internal sensations, hunger, thirst, etc." In the description of Madeline's Chamber, the images are visual with the exception of a few concerned with touch and temperature. Some of them, e.g., the arch of the casement and fruits, flower and bunches of knot-grass are colourless. The "splendid dyes" and "thousand heraldries" of the stained-glass panes are suggestive but indefinite as to form and colour. The colour is introduced gradually in the "twilight saints", the "dim emblazonings" and the "shielded

scutcheon" which "blush'd with blood of queens and kings" and finally in the distribution of tinted lights on the girl's kneeling figure. Images of taste are suggested more by Milton than by any other poet. Keats introduces, like Milton, fruits from different parts of the Orient, and he derives the gourd and the creamy curd from Milton himself. Temperature is suggested by "the wintry moon" and "warm gules" in the passages referred to, while the sense of touch is suggested by "fair breast" and "Rose bloom" "on her hands, together prest". In the picture of Madeline's undressing are presented in quick succession images of warmth, smell, touch, sight, sound and movement.)

The description of Madeline in her bed presents additional images of softness, warmth, and relaxation :

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppi'd warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Keats attains the acme of sensuousness in his description of the feast which Porphyro prepares for Madeline :

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he forth from the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

The great Odes represent the fullest maturity of Keats's poetry. They reveal perfection of his art as much as profoundness of his philosophy and depth of his thought. "Keats was a better artist in this period (during the period of the composition of the Odes) as well as a better philosopher".

[*Endymion* may not have deserved the castigation of the reviewers, but it had defects which attracted notice in spite of its

beauties. Wordy exuberance, predominance of cloying visual imagery connected with tints of colour and lack of clear comprehension, critical insight and experience of life, are undoubtedly to be included in them. Mere pictorial beauty is not sufficient for poetry. In *Hyperion* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* Keats avoided the defects and was above the fitful moods in which he had composed his earlier poem and his special bias for the "poetry of greenh". In the Odes he advanced a step further.

He had now achieved the clear and steady vision of life which is essential to great poetry. At the same time there was a progressive development of the metrical form and perfection of poetical imagery. In *Endymion* and even in *Hyperion* Keats emulated the myth-making poets of ancient Greece. In the *Ode to Psyche* and the *Ode to Maia* he yearned for, and realised, the serene beauty of Greek art.] All the same there is pictorial richness in the fusion of descriptive details of natural beauty in the painting of Cupid and Psyche,

—two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied;
'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian.....

The passage is a fine example of landscape painting in words. It evokes simultaneously images of pressure, colour, temperature, smell and shape.

[In *Ode to a Nightingale* Keats combined the delight of artistic activity with despondency into which he fell in 1819. This the poet wanted to live down with the help of the intoxication produced by wine and the ecstasy caused by the vision of natural beauty.]

O for a draught of vintage ! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth.
O for a beaker full of the warm south,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth.

Here there is not only visual image, but also images of sound,

movement, gaiety and temperature *i.e.*, the warmth and the sunshine of Southern Europe. Beauty of colour and form is brought into prominence, heightened and emphasised by these. Again, "verdurous glooms," "summer eve" and "embalmed darkness" (St. IV-V) introduce variety and a subdued note. The imagery of "darkness" fits in with the notion of oblivion which brings relief to one suffering from misery and mental anguish :

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and
dies.....

Altogether the Ode is unparalleled for variety of imagery, the most noticeable images being those of gloom and oblivion

[Tennyson was in direct line of poetic descent from Keats, so far as love of nature was concerned, although one belonged to the epoch of the French Revolution and the Romantic Revival and the other was a child of Victorian England and lover of the smug democratic ideal. Up to 1842 Tennyson's development as poet had a likeness to that of Keats. Both "begin with a passionate absorption in natural beauty—in colour, sounds and odours, both abound in rich and sometimes confused melodies. From such *fine* excess both of them move away towards the expression of the plain, the grand and the heroic ; away from Spenser (the sleepy Spenser, not the Platonist) towards Homer and Dante ; they get to it.....in their youth, not too late to preserve intact the full rich capital of their sensibility to things seen and heard".* Like Keats, Tennyson had thus more than one style. He wrote simple sketches in a rustic vein, quiet and descriptive stanzas as well as poems of languor and deliberately artistic pieces. To take Tennyson's first poetical efforts, the volume published in 1830 fell flat on the public, but it contained *Mariana*, *The Dying Swan* and *The Ballad of Oriana*. In spite of their immaturity, the colour-effects in the detailed delineation of natural scenery are remarkable.] Tennyson's power of imaginative landscape-painting is palpable even in these early poems as these passages will show :—

The plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,

*O. Elton. *Tennyson and Matthew Arnold*, p 8.

Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful gray.
With an inner voice the river ran,
Adown it floated a dying swan,
And loudly did lament.

... ..

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.

One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh;
Above in the wind was the swallow,
Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marish green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,

Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.

The pictorial effect is marred by what has been called mawkishness here as well as in other pieces. The somewhat artificial note, the prettiness of the picture, and other defects were traced by critics to the "cockney" school and particularly to Keats. And the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood* which had been so cruel to Keats, came down upon Tennyson out of their opposition to his supposed discipleship to the Keatsian tradition. Tennyson's obvious differences from Keats are the undeniable melody of versification and technical skill, and the delineation of his pictures from observed facts rather than from literary sources.

In the volume published in 1832, the improvement was considerable. *The Lady of Shalott*, *Oenone*, and *The Lotos-Eaters* are famous even now, though the faults were picked out by the critics who were uncompromising.

[*The Lotos-Eaters* reveals Tennyson to have been a poet of languors and is reminiscent of Spenser's *Bower of Bliss* and Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*.] Passages like

Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

and

... ..

The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there

Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
 Drops in a silent autumn night.

are exquisitely pictorial, and reveal the nature of Tennyson's artistic instinct. *The Lady of Shalott*, besides being pictorial, indicates the charm which the Middle Ages and their legends had cast on Tennyson. The pictures are not only rich in colour, but they also reflect the variegated life of a distant past.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
 Little breezes dusk and shiver
 Thro' the wave that runs for ever
 By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.

... ..

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
 Like to some branch of stars we see
 Hung in the golden Galaxy.

The bridle bells rang merrily
 As he rode down to Camelot :
 And from his blazon'd baldric slung
 A mighty silver bugle hung,
 And as he rode his armour rung,
 Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
 Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
 The helmet and the helmet-feather
 Burn'd like one burning flame together,

As he rode down to Camelot.
 As often thro' the purple night,
 Below the starry clusters bright,
 Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shallot.

Passages like these bring out one noticeable aspect of Tennyson's 'art, viz., his sensuousness, partly traceable to Keats. This, however, is limited to visual images, images of touch, taste, temperature etc. not being prominent in him as in Keats. In one of his poems, viz., *Oenone* the background is furnished by the

classical age. But it has been transformed by Tennyson into the romantic medieval epoch with its chivalry and knighterrantry.

The pictorial qualities of Tennyson's poetry go on increasing, though the technical skill involved in them is developed at the expense of creative originality. There is at times an excess of sentimentality and emphasis on the conventional in *Oenone* and *Enoch Arden*. But their supremely adroit nicety of phrase and picturesque descriptions must have admirers. Reference may be made to the following passages :

The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coil'd around the stately stems, and ran
Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world.....
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

It is clear that Tennyson has a tendency to "pack his material."* He has the impulse to elaborate; he condenses and is yet luxurious. His manner is, in consequence, somewhat artificial and showy. So far as the above passages are concerned, it is evident that though admirable in execution and finish, the pictures can be objected to on the ground of an excess of varnish in the painting. Tennyson can be artificial, even where he is simple.

In both *The Princess* and *In Memoriam* there is more substance than has been noticeable in Tennyson's work hitherto. In spite of the fact that the former introduces a serious contemporary problem in a way at once attractive and provoking, the scenic descriptions tend rather to eclipse the fictitious dramatic action. The elegiac outpourings in *In Memoriam* represent the summit of Tennyson's poetic powers matured by patient labour for seventeen long years.

*O. Elton : op. cit. p. 8.

The problem of immortality, the clash between doubt and fear, dream and reality, ardent desire and unswerving confidence are viewed in their bearing on the events of daily life, not as matters of dialectic thought. But what surpasses all other appeals, are the music of the verse and the pictorial beauty of some of the passages. Monotony and stiffness are undoubtedly noticeable in many of these, but their bewitching charm is undeniable.

The following stanzas will serve as specimen :

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold :
Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main :
Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall ;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair :

... ..

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day ;
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies ;
The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
The cattle huddled on the lea ;
And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
The sunbeams strikes along the world :

But the appeal is more moral than pictorial on the whole. Except in isolated passages there is no pictorial charm.

The *Idylls of the King* demonstrates how Tennyson now fell a victim to the fascination of pre-Raphaelitism to which he had been drawn by his partiality for precise details and minute observation, partly illustrated in poems where the influence of Keats was found by carping critics.

In the *Idylls* interest is kindled, as in *The Lady of Shalott*, by the atmosphere of a distant legendary past and the spectacular background of the Middle Ages. The martial dress, the glint of the armour, the verdure of the forest and the field, the glamour of the

court—all contribute to it. The “Bright light as from a stained-glass window” which suffuses the whole work, suggests the contemporary painting of Rossetti and Burne Jones

Contrast of colours appears prominent in the portrait of the wounded and dying Arthur :

.....a brow

Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east :
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust.

... ..

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream.....

The Middle Ages and the Arthurian legend had attracted the interest of William Morris and Tennyson almost equally and partly inspired their pre-Raphaelite tendencies. The *Idylls of the King* was published as a single volume in 1859, and Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere*, and other poems came out in 1858. These poems owed something to Tennyson's early pieces like *Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere* and *Sir Galahad*. “Idyll” means a picture, and Tennyson's poems really consist of *vignettes*. Though there is symbolism in the Epic of Arthur, ornamentation is deliberate and copious at times. The regular manner of the poem, as it has been pointed out, is now simple and now elaborate. *Morte d' Arthur* was “set in a scrap of country-house idyll”. This was removed when *The Passing of Arthur* replaced it. The style of the latter, as Elton says, is decorative - heroic.† One of the best specimens may be cited :

Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—

†O. Elton, op. cit. p. 35.

Strike from the sea ; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.

✓ In an earlier chapter the effect of sensuousness on the realisation of the spiritual has been pointed out. Too much attention to sense-impression, to form and outline, to tints of colour and variegated hues, makes one lose sight of the soul in Nature. The superficial turns the mind away from the under-current, the ephemeral from the eternal. This is noticeable in the luscious, descriptive and dreamy poetry of Spenser, in Keats's poetry of verdure and of "murmurous pines," in the pre-Raphaelite poetry of D. G. Rossetti and William Morris. Tennyson's poetry furnishes one more example. ✓ As Tennyson paints Nature, she is without a soul. Wordsworth believed that nature was alive, and thought, loved, felt and enjoyed in a way so like ours that we could communicate with her and she with us. Not only Nature as a whole. Every flower, every stream, every wood, the sky and the mountain shared in the life of the whole, and could commune with the human mind. In Shelley there is the same kinship between man and Nature, but it is vital Love that makes the life of the universe and of Nature. In both Nature is alive and permeated by spirit. Tennyson was a Victorian under the influence of scientific thought which was a characteristic feature of Victorian England. This made him wonderfully accurate in his representation of Nature in poetry—every detail in his descriptions is scientifically correct. But he cannot conceive of an active life in the natural world and its parts. His Nature does not feel or love. Tennyson does not even associate mythical gods and goddesses with nature—with forests, fields, rivers and mountains. "His Nature poetry was materialised", says S. Brooke‡. Hence in his portraits of Nature, supremely artistic and skilful as they are, there is a want of animation and of kinship with man. It is its lifelessness that impresses the readers. The flowers bloom in silence and loveliness, but convey no message of sympathy or hope ; the wan waves break on the shore, but excite no thrill in the human heart ; rivers flow on ; the green hills raise their heads in the sky ; but they are unconcerned with man's joys and fears. ✧ So Tennyson sings of

2 ✧ a wind that shrills

All night in a waste land, where no one comes
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

‡Tennyson and Mathew Arnold, p. 223.

He paints, almost without enthusiasm,

a land

In which it seemed always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon ;

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem

..... but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,

Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.

Generally no human being intrudes on his landscape and if anybody were to appear in this desolate world, he would feel absolutely out of his element.

[It is only likely that Tennyson's conception of Nature should have been the outcome of the scepticism which dominated Victorian thought. Sensitive souls were troubled by doubts, and these often found expression in poetry. They have left their traces in *In Memoriam*, and it is clear that Tennyson could not shake himself free from their influence. "God's in his Heaven. All's right with the world" does not represent Tennyson's conviction as Browning's. He appears to have tided over spiritual conflict in some of his later poems, but he could not realise the Eternal in Nature as a matter of simple faith.]

*Bazini
Lusim*

LECTURE V

Rossetti and Morris

BY far the most pictorial poetry in the whole range of English literature is Pre-Raphaelite poetry written in the Victorian Age by Rossetti and William Morris. The most important reason is that the poets themselves were painters in this case. D. G. Rossetti devoted 20 years of his youth to painting and could not easily decide if he should turn to poetry. He wrote poems and took lessons in painting at the same time. Holman Hunt and Millais were his guides in the sphere of art. Hunt advised Rossetti, who was not satisfied with the work he had been doing, to begin a large picture, and gain technique. But when he sent some of his poems and translations to Leigh Hunt to whom he was yet unknown, the latter wrote, "I guess indeed that you are altogether not so musical as pictorial." Yet Leigh Hunt expressed himself most generously about the poems, seeing in them the work of an unquestionable poet, thoughtful and imaginative, with rare powers of expression. "I hailed you as such at once, without any misgiving", he added. Morris had tried his hand at painting, though he learnt also designing, illumination and tapestry-weaving and other decorative arts. A painter by instinct, Millais wrote poetry in the *Journal of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*.

The reason why painters wrote poetry is to be found in the fact that poetry and painting, though different as media, express the same thing. It is Beauty that is in the background, and this may seek expression either in the disposition of colours on the canvas or in rhythm and imagery. D. G. Rossetti defended his position as a painter-poet in these significant words, "If any man has any poetry in him, he should paint, for it has all been said and written, and they have scarcely begun to paint it."*

In the case of English Pre-Raphaelite authors, the pictorial qualities of poetry were determined by the characteristic features of Pre-Raphaelite Italian painting and of tapestry which they imitated. Pre-Raphaelitism in English painting was essentially a rebellion against convention which was imputed to the followers of Raphael whose perfection of technique and sublimity of conception were supposed to have told upon their originality and initiative. Reynolds especially and even the followers of Hogarth were adversely criti-

*A. C. Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 20.

cised as conventional. Hence "Back to nature" became the motto of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and Ruskin said that it had adopted only one principle—that of absolute, uncompromising truth and faithful imitation of nature "down to the minutest details". This virtue was discovered by the new school of artists in Italian masters of medieval times preceding Raphael, like Giotto and Leonardo. It was insisted upon by Hunt and Millais in particular. But in reality nature was often forgotten, since the details were all imagined details which were the figment of the artist's imagination. So far as technique was concerned, attention to minute details led the Pre-Raphaelites to build up their pictures bit by bit like a mosaic, finishing each piece of the work without retouching, before another was begun (Rossetti, however, did not, except in a few of his earliest productions, follow this method). "Instead of aiming at harmony by concentrating colour and working away from a point, they developed each individual portion with the same fidelity. The mistake was that colours do not in a scene, as it appears to the eye, stand alone, but are modified by the juxtaposition of other colours. Thus a scene studied with isolated attention to the details is apt to wear a hardness and harshness which do not reproduce the scene as it appears to the eye".* Pre-Raphaelitism has thus meant stiffness and archaic handling which characterised early monkish drawings and illuminations, as distinct from flowing outlines. But this stiffness due to emphasis on details was not admitted by the Pre-Raphaelites to be an essential part of their principles. "We should never have admitted that the relinquishment of this habit of work by a matured painter would make him less of a Pre-Raphaelite," says Holman Hunt.** All that the Pre-Raphaelites wanted was freshness and sincerity of design.

Contrast of colours was another mark of Pre-Raphaelite painting and has to be traced to certain characteristics of the medieval age. This, more than any other epoch, delighted in splash of colour, which shone forth in ceremonial dress, processions and rituals. Royalty, aristocracy and the church equally delighted in variegated hues, and medieval art was influenced by their taste. Religious in a special sense, Pre-Raphaelite or early Italian art was concerned mostly with church decoration. It tried to impress moral truth by reproducing Biblical stories in a colourful manner. Imitation of the characteristics of medieval life and art was a distinct mark of Pre-Raphaelitism in England. It may be said to have been inspired with a passion for the past, just as Scott's romanticism was.

*A. C. Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 21.

***Ibid*, p. 21.

The ground had already been prepared for this passion for the past in England. The Tractarian movement drew men's minds to medieval architecture and medieval literature, while the Oxford Movement, besides its services to Catholicism, led to the revival of interest in archaeology. Rationalism and commercialism were rampant in Victorian England, and the human soul was smothered. Darwinism was brooding over the intellectual world and there was a spiritual blight. "Creeds and systems were going more completely into the intellectual melting-pot than ever before in England. Nothing was a very sure refuge for the minds of younger men—and especially of the younger poets—but the beauty of the visible world as revealed and made enduring in medieval art. The visible world itself was to be their sacramental wine and bread, their means of communion with the unseen."* In addition, the spirituality of the medieval times and of Catholicism served as an anodyne to the materialism of the age.

It was Ruskin who had directed the attention of the British people to medieval and even earlier Italian painting. Morris became a lover of old churches and cathedrals in England and France. He furnished his house with medieval furniture for the revival of the decorative arts and spent large sums of money in collecting illuminated manuscripts. (Woodford Hall where Morris spent his early life, had a self-contained medieval system and held old festivals, e. g., the masque of St. George was presented here with great success.) Rossetti painted medieval religious pictures like *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and the *Ecce Ancilla*, purely secular medieval pictures like *King Arthur's Tomb*, *Sir Galahad* etc. and the whole Dante Series. Though Morris did not develop into a painter, his first picture was *Sir Tristram in his illness in the garden of King Mark's palace*, suggested by medieval romance. The subjects of the "frescoes" on the walls of the Oxford Union Debating Hall were legends from the Arthurian cycle. Church-windows were designed by Burne-Jones and executed by Morris who was further interested in tapestry-weaving. The arras tapestry of the *Adoration of the Magi* in Exeter College chapel at Oxford was finished in February, 1888, and is described as the most perfect figure or symbol of Morris's own art at its highest and best.

It was Pre-Raphaelitism in art including painting, designing, tapestry-weaving etc. which with its love of details and simplicity, its love of colour and its passion for the middle ages, influenced English poetry in the nineteenth century.

Like Pre-Raphælite Italian painting it gives details in clear

*A. Noyes, *William Morris*, pp. 14-15.

outlines, is fond of colour-effects and depicts medieval legends and the dream-world of the medieval age. Here is an illustration of the transmutation of one art into another. Painting not merely influences literary art but is transformed into it, as it were. The aesthetic appeal, in one case, is to the eye and in the other to the mind or imagination.

Morris's poetry bears deep traces of the Middle Ages. Though some of the poems of the *Earthly Paradise* were derived from Greek myths and Greek heroic legends to which were also added the stories from northern and eastern sources, its setting is medieval, the stories are told in medieval surroundings of the fourteenth century.

The fascination of the archaic and romantic atmosphere of the Middle Ages prompted Morris's interest in the kindred colouring of the epochs which produced the sagas and the epic of Beowulf. He took about 18 months or so in composing *Sigurd the Volsung*, an epic of the Volsungs re-written in English verse—which he himself regarded as his highest achievement in literature. Its subject, according to him, is "the story which he counted the first in the world"—"the Great Story of the North ... which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks."* He felt convinced that he had treated this story with fidelity and largeness of manner. A volume of translations from the Icelandic, under the title of *Three Northern Love Stories* appeared in 1858. In 1895, the metrical version of *Beowulf* came out with the assistance of a Cambridge Scholar. The verse translation of the *Æneid* and *Life and Death of Jason* had been published earlier, illustrating once more his interest in the archaic and in the distant past. It is this, again, which led him to originate the movement for the protection of ancient buildings. He said in a statement that these were ancient monuments of art and had become the subject "of one of the most interesting of studies, and of an enthusiasm, religious, historical, artistic, which is one of the undoubted gains of our time." "Scanty as they are now become, they are still wonderful treasures." The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings was soon after founded, and Morris was its first Secretary.

The picturesque features of the medieval epoch punctuated minute details. Morris's love of the latter, manifested in his Pre-Raphaelitism, was intensified by his interest in crafts. His own life has been marked off into periods of dyeing, designing, weaving, etc. in which one or other of such arts was his absorbing interest. The firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. of which Morris was the

*J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, p. 101.

guiding genius, was formed in 1861, and church decoration was at first its main concern, stained glass, tiles and altar-cloths being supplied by it. Morris had taken to illumination as a pastime before visiting Iceland, and clung seriously to it for 3 or 4 years after his return. About this time he also began to study handwriting as a fine art. "In the decoration of his painted books—as in everything which had to do with pattern and colour—there is also an advance in splendour or colouring and breadth of design, but the earliest are in their simple treatment as faultless as the latest."*

During the period of composition of the epic of *Sigurd the Volsung*, Morris's daily occupation, or what he calls the bread and cheese side of his activity, was the study and practice of dyeing and the cognate arts. The work of his firm (Morris and Co., Decorators) had been hampered and often crippled by the difficulty of getting material which would take good colour. In his essay *Of Dyeing as an Art* he gives an account, at once lucid and fascinating, "of the processes which he himself had to recover from abuse or disuse through laborious researches and experiments." "The Art of Dyeing is," in his opinion, "a difficult one, needing for its practice a good craftsman, with plenty of experience."§ It has been remarked by an acquaintance of his that "not a single dyeing (by Morris) went wrong, nor was any appreciable quantity of yarn wasted."§§ He worked most diligently at the lost art of indigo-dyeing. The decay of European indigo-dyeing, not practised till the end of the 16th century, was due to a defect in the process. Morris steered clear of it. It was absorption in dyeing and dye-stuffs which stopped his work as illuminator. Tapestry-weaving too came to attract him. When Morris inspected Kelmscott Manor House where he wanted to settle on leaving London, its tapestry-room interested him deeply.

He wrote 20 years later, "The walls of it are hung with tapestry of about 1600, representing the story of Samson; they were never great works of art, and now when all the bright colours are faded out and nothing is left but the indigo blues, the grays and the warm yellowy browns, they look better, I think, than they were meant to look: at any rate they make the walls a very pleasant background for the living people who haunt the room."

When Morris left London and took Kelmscott Manor House, a room was hung with tapestry woven by himself. One of the first things he did after taking possession of the House was to have a tapestry-loom built in his bed-room, at which he might practise the

*J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, p. 89.

§*Ibid.* p. 97.

§§*Ibid.* p. 97.

art of weaving with his own hands. He worked at his loom literally from "morn till dewy eve."

Soon after his occupation of the Manor House, Morris established a new industry; he began to manufacture rugs and carpets. In a few months enough specimens had been successfully produced to allow of a public exhibition of them. According to Morris, this new branch of business of Morris and Co. was an "attempt to make England independent of the East for Carpets which may claim to be considered works of art." The Kelmscott Press was founded and started working at the beginning of 1891 with type cast by Morris himself with infinite pains. It shows his interest in printing to which may be added book-binding and publication which he took up almost simultaneously.

Morris was connected with a number of associations for the promotion of crafts. He was a regular visitor and adviser at the South Kensington Museum and at the Royal School of Art Needlework. He once addressed the annual meeting of the School of Science and Art connected with the Wedgwood Institute at Burslem and delivered his message relating to the crafts. His inspiration was at the root of the formation of the Art Workers' Guild (1884) which included craftsmen drawn from many quarters working in various methods. Under the influence of Morris, they all consciously aimed at a Renaissance of the decorative arts. It was this guild which facilitated the institution of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1887. Ruskin had suggested the idea in a letter to Morris in 1878: "How much good might be done by the establishment of an exhibition, anywhere, in which the right doing, instead of the clever doing, of all that men know how to do, should be the test of acceptance." The Arts and Crafts Society was another institution with which Morris was in touch as a member of the Executive Committee. He used to lecture, whenever time and strength permitted, on the arts of life—more especially, during his later career—on printing and its kindred arts.

It is the arts that contribute largely to Morris's method of literary composition. Hence it has been suggested that Morris "never spoke, or apparently thought, of poetry as involving more than the craftsman's qualities—singleness of eye, trained aptitude of hand, and such integrity of mind as would not consciously produce rubbish." Morris himself said, "That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense...there is no such thing...it is a mere matter of craftsmanship. If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he is weaving tapestry,

he had better shut up – he 'll never do any good at all.”*

Rossetti's love of the distant past come out in his translations. His earliest metrical composition was a translation from a German romantic ballad. He began the translation of the *Nibelungenlied*. The medievalism and the passion of Browning whom he discovered in 1847 strongly attracted him.

Rossetti developed early a taste for the legendary, the strange and the supernatural. Later came his interest in Dante and his circle as evidenced by his *Early Italian Poets*. As early as in 1850 Rossetti had translated a few lines from *The Roman de la Rose*. He was seeking that remoteness which lends enchantment. In one of his letters to his brother William, he writes how he has been reading “all manner of old romants to pitch upon stunning words for poetry. I have found several, some of which are tremendously fine.” The original of his poem *The Staff and Scrip* has the background of chivalry. Rossetti was brought up upon the study of Dante, and his *Vita Nuova* reproduces the spirit of the original. In *Troy Town* the classical subject is attenuated by the spirit of medieval Italy. The poem might have been suggested by Botticelli's picture of the *Calumny* or Aphrodite rising from the sea, and Rossetti has been called a Florentine of Dante's age.

Rossetti's medievalism has also been called romantic archaism which, because of its indifference to reality, has been likened to a dream atmosphere. His disposition of figures and images is rather unusual and fantastic. Morris's medieval world too was the product of a kind of day-dreaming. But Morris was eminently a man of action with a scheme of social reform, and the divorce between art and reality was a sort of reaction in his case.

Appeal to the eye is likely to diminish the force of appeal to the soul. Hence pictorial poetry is likely to be passionless, figures appearing in it are likely to be motionless. An unreal atmosphere prevails in it. The dream-atmosphere in Morris invites comparison with that in Spenser. Morris depicted figures of men and women who wandered as in a dream in the placidity and restfulness of the medieval Golden Age without knowing suffering and sorrow. *The Defence of Guenevere* and *The Haystack in the Floods* are looked upon as exceptions where reality is recognised. In both there are passion and movement, and both are personal, though the setting is the romantic medieval age. But Morris's early work is different from the later. In the *Life and Death of Jason* as well as in *The Earthly Paradise*, the essential breath of life is lacking totally. Neither Jason

*A. C. Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 82.

nor Medea lives. They move as in a dream, but do not wake into the world of passion and suffering. They have not been endowed with character in any sense of the term.

Medieval dualism of matter and spirit is probably responsible for a conception of nature which is common to Spenser and the Pre-Raphaelite poets. None of them has any pantheistic leanings. That nature has a soul or breathes a spirit is not their creed. Hence man's emotions and passions do not evoke any sympathetic response from it, and it is never believed to be in tune with humanity's feelings, as they are not reflected in it. Actually they conceive it as dead and inert. Their conception is different from Wordsworth's, for example. Morris and Spenser are in this respect in the same category. Rossetti, as explained later, has an outlook somewhat different from theirs. But it is impossible to find in Morris a passage comparable to Wordsworthian lines like the following :

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

(The Daffodils)

or,

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trail'd its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The Pre-Raphaelites believe in a rigid line of demarcation between nature and man, which precludes all communion between them ; for this depends on similarity and contact. That is why few human figures intrude into their landscapes ; for they would have been absolutely out of place in the midst of dead Nature.

The lonely and dismal northern region visited by the Argonauts is thus described by Morris :

Most pitiless and stark the winter grew
Meanwhile beneath a sky of cloudless blue,
And sun that warmed not, till they nigh forgot
The green lush spring, the summer rich and hot,
The autumn fragrant with slow-ripening fruit ;
Till each grew *listless, dull* to the heart's root ;
For day passed day, and yet no change they saw
In the white sparkling plain without a flaw,

No cloud, no change within the sunny sky,
Or in the wind, that rose at noon, to die
Before the sunset, and no change at all
In the *drear silence* of the *dead* nightfall.

(*The Life and Death of Jason*, Bk. XII)

On the Edge of the Wilderness brings out the dreariness of a lonely region. The breaking out of the summer dawn on a desolate wind-swept landscape is depicted in these lines:

Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The *heavy elms* wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
Round the *lone* house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

(*Morris, Summer Dawn*)

Morris was fond of the sunny side and of the pageantry of the Middle Ages as Chaucer was. Variegated hues appealed to him strikingly, but he had not the intensity of perception which noticed subtle shades or the imagination which read deep significance into them. The lines on the passage of the Symplegades have splendid colour-effects:

Then all men, with their eyes now cleared of brine,
Beheld the many-coloured rainbow shine
Over the rocks, and saw it fade away,
And saw the opening cleared of sea and spray,
And saw the *green* sea lap about the feet
Of those *blue* hills*.....

and

.....the eyes of Lynceus might
Just now and then behold the *deep blue* shine
Betwixt the scattering of the *silver* brine;
But sometimes 'twixt the clouds the sun would pass
And show the high rocks *glittering* like to glass—†

Aeetes thus looks for a change of colour on the face of Medea;
And therewithal he gazed at her, and thought
To see the *rosy* flush by such words brought
Across her face; as in the *autumn eve*,
Just as the sun's last half begins to leave
The shivering world, both east and west are *red*,
But calm and *pale* she turned about her head.**

The Life and Death of Jason*, Bk. VI. †*Ibid.*, Bk. VI. *Ibid.*, Bk. VIII.

Morris's interest in painting too has been transmuted, as it were, into literature. Traces of this transformation are noticeable even in his early work, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*. Lines like

And every morn I scarce could pray at all,
For Launcelot's *red-golden hair* would play,
Instead of *sunlight*, on the *painted* wall,
Mingled with dreams of what the priest did say —*

have an appeal mostly based on colour-effects. World-pictures are, however, more attractive in *The Life and Death of Jason*. Atalanta is thus portrayed† :

.....from Arcadian forests came forth one
Who like a goddess 'mid the rowers shone,
Swift-running Atalanta, *golden-haired*,
Grey-eyed and simple ; with her *white* limbs bared,
And sandalled feet set firm upon the sand,
Amid the wondering heroes did she stand
A very maid.....

Argo, as she was fitted out for the voyage, is pictured in the following lines :

Gleaming with *gold* and *blue* and cinnabar,
The long new oars beside the rowlocks are,
The sail hangs flapping in the light west wind,
Nor aught undone can any craftsman find
From stem to stern‡.....

Rossetti's love of the Middle Ages, though bearing some resemblance to Morris's, has a differentiating feature. The spectacular characteristics of the epoch, institutions like chivalry, royalty and the Catholic church with their colourful and sometimes gorgeous paraphernalia cannot cast into shade its spirituality. This inspired many whom the church rituals did not attract and who had a feeling of revulsion against the corruption of the clergy and the tyranny of kings. It was spirituality that furnished the basis of the emotional mysticism of St Francis, St. Bernard and others. Even the philosophic St. Thomas Aquinas who represents in his *Summa Theologica* and *Summa contra Gentiles* the essence of Catholic theology, had the mystic strain. This has been traced by some to the influence of Neo-Platonism which came to impress Catholic Europe even before the revival of Platonic Studies in the Florentine academy of the Medicis during the early stage of the Renaissance. But it was certainly indigenous in Christianity in the Fourth

**King Arthur's Tomb*. †Bk. III. ‡Bk. III.

Gospel. While the gay, sunny and spectacular outer life of the Middle Ages captivated the imagination of Morris, a mystic idealism furnished the key-note to the inner being of Rossetti, and it was the outcome of his interest in the intense religious spirit of the epoch and in the poetry of Dante and his circle.

Dante's poetry is said to have summed up the teachings of Aquinas. It is characteristic of Christian spirituality that the imagery of the *Divina Commedia* has often a strong sensuous appeal ; it is intensely visual. This was suggested by the superficial phantasmagoria of the Middle Ages, bloody wars between king and king, family feuds carried to extremes, chivalric adventures, gorgeous rituals of the Catholic Church, punishment meted out to the heretic by the Inquisition and the *auto-da-fé*. But spiritual realization in the medieval epoch also left its traces in the great poem, in its *glorias* and the Beatific Vision. Mysticism is the basis of the *Vita Nuova*, where love is transformed and transmuted into something ethereal. Beatrice is no longer a woman but is sublimated into Truth almost beyond the reach of man's communion. A similar, though not identical, conception of love is revealed in the poetry of Cavalcanti and other members of the Dante circle as much as in Petrarch's Sonnets, though Laura is more of a woman than Beatrice. It is the inner core of the Middle Ages as distinguished from superficial crust that finds expression in these poems as much as it is realised in the personal lives of the saints and sages.

Rossetti's cultural contact with Dante and his circle, his interest in the spiritual ecstasy of the medieval epoch and his own instincts produced in him a mystic mood.

To his Italian blood he owed the strength and keenness of his sensations and intensity of passion. These led him to realize a type of existence in which beauty was the dominating factor. He thus became whole-heartedly a lover of art without any other interest in the world. It is well-known how he was unconcerned with contemporary politics, philanthropy, social obligation and even with religion. He was whole-heartedly a lover of art which aimed at the expression of beauty, and was thus the fore-runner of the aesthetic school which in the closing years of the 19th century came to have as its rallying cry the motto—"art for art's sake." A diffuse æstheticism was the legacy of Rossetti to his immediate followers

But, at the same time, it has to be noted that Rossetti never looked upon sensuous beauty as the final reality or the ultimate object

of human desire. On the contrary, he clearly indicated that outward beauty was only an index of the beauty of the soul which was beyond the range of vision and touch. In his paintings he claimed to have reflections of the higher beauty which appertains not to the material but to the transcendental reality. Benson's analysis of Rossetti's message is illuminating : ".....he was not in any sense an Englishman, though he used the English language for his medium of expression. He belonged in reality to the medieval school of Italian poetry.....In an age which dealt largely with abstractions, he had no affinity with abstract thought. To him the emotion and the experience of life lay entirely in the intricate and complex development of human passion, the mysterious relations of human spirits; but even here he did not approach the thought from its abstract side. For him human passion was inextricably connected with its outward manifestations, in the emotions stirred by the apprehension of beauty alike definite and indefinite, the gracious mystery of which human form and features, gesture, movement and glance seem a sacramental expression. This was not in Rossetti's case a purely material sentiment ; all these outward lovelinesses seemed to him to hide a secret, to be the very voice of some remote spirit speaking instantly to the soul."* In defending himself against the charge that he was a member of the "Fleshly School of Poetry," Rossetti said that he never believed that the body was greater than the soul and that in *The House of life* he declared the delights of the body "to be as naught if not ennobled by the concurrence of the soul at all times."† The underlying truth is greater and more beautiful than any human expression of it, and "to Rossetti the material expression of beauty was the only key to its mystery, and, for the present at least, indissolubly connected with it : The soul must be alive to the hint that comes to it from the beauty of outward form. The task of his life therefore was the embodiment of mystical passion in poetry."‡ As Cazamian says, "... his plastic imagination did not find perfect satisfaction either in form or in colour. His half-English heredity and the influence of the moral environment in which his whole life was spent perhaps explain, in his temperament, the influx of a mystic idealism."**

This led Rossetti to drift away from the realism of his early years where the painting of obtrusive details in the pre-Raphaelite fashion was his chief characteristic. He resorted to symbolism, for mystic idealism naturally turns to this as the fittest vehicle. This is

*Benson : *Rossetti* pp. 78-79 †*Ibid.*, p. 79. ‡*Ibid.*, p. 80.

***A History of English Literature*, p. 1172.

clear in *The Blessed Damozel* as well as in many later poems. Stanzas like these are illustrative :

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn ;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

... ..

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on ;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun ;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.
It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

* * * * *

From the fix'd place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path ; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

Rossetti's masterpiece, *The House of Life*, illustrates the most modern aspects of symbolism, and "only very distantly recalls the uninterrupted allegory of the Middle Ages or of the Renaissance."

Symbolism in Rossetti is not abstract or obscure. The pictorial qualities of the following sonnet on Death-in-Love, though not Pre-Raphaelite, are quite impressive in spite of its subtler significance :

There came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his gonfalon :
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought thereon,
O! soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue !
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring, wakens to,
Shook in its folds ; and through my heart its power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all was new.

But a veiled woman followed, and she caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and cling, —
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's wing,
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,
And said to me, "Behold, there is no breath :
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

The evening of life with a fond lingering look on the glory of youth which is fading away, has been graphically portrayed in the symbolic sonnet *The Hill Summit* :

And now that I have climbed and won this height,
I must tread downward through the sloping shade
And travel the bewildered tracks till night.
Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed
And see the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last light.

The conception of all-pervading Beauty is the theme of a sonnet where the imagery associated with Mariolatry is employed.

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned ; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.*

Rossetti is here remarkably different from the narrative poet Morris, because his "imagery is always symbolic—even where he was not consciously doing more than present pictures to the imagination." Description is not really his proper province. His poetry has also been called visionary, but he is concerned with ideas rather than with objects, and there is in him a powerful union of fact and imagination. Passion is never absent from his poetry which is charged with intense feeling. Non-human nature is not quite dead in Rossetti as in Spenser and Morris. Hence silence or loneliness too conveys a message in his poetry and is not oppressive. An English noon is thus described:

The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.†

**Soul's Beauty.* †*Silent Noon.*

Symbolism in Rossetti was facilitated by his remarkable tendency to brevity. He is never diffuse, and he shuns repetition. "I hate long poems," he often declared; and of Sydney Dobell he once impatiently enunciated, "What a pity it is that he insists on being generally so long-winded."* Emphasis and condensation have been spoken of as the special characteristics of Rossetti, although the mood is too much drawn out even when particular stanzas are condensed. It is in these that graphic sketches are prominent, and it is these that bear out the remark that "Rossetti's poems ... were based upon some clearly seen pictorial impression of a dramatic moment."† Here he resembles Browning who dramatises momentary flashes of experience; but the latter is deficient in pictorial qualities so noticeable in Rossetti.

Symbolism and pictorialism form a combination with intensity of feeling and emotion in Rossetti. This has at its background an ardour based on religion or "some indefinable anguish." Along with this there is the imagination, delicately refined, and attracted by religious, archaic, or allegorical visions, which evokes pictures appealing alike to sense and to mind. Rossetti, more than any other poet, has the magic of true poetry which makes people feel what is inexpressible. And this is the product of a combination of symbolic and pictorial composition.

Rossetti sometimes imitates the style of ancient ballads, and writes narratives in which is sought to be introduced the atmosphere of the medieval epoch. Here there is no scope for symbolism. But he succeeds in condensing into stanzas of powerful imagery the uninterrupted sequence of dramatic situations, and in these the imagery is impressive and significant because of its pictorial qualities. The following passages from *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy* may serve as illustrations:

The sails were set, and the oars kept tune
To the double flight of the ship and the moon :
Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped
Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead :
As white as a lily glimmered she
Like a ship's fair ghost upon the sea.

Berold thus describes his own experience after the tragedy :

I Berold was down in the sea ;
And passing strange though the thing may be,
Of dreams then known I remember me.
Blithe is the shout on Harfleur's strand

*Benson : *Rossetti*, p. 82. †Bensen : *Rossetti*, p. 82.

When morning lights the sails to land ;
 And blithe is Honfleur's echoing gloam
 When mothers call the children home ;
 And high do the bells of Rouen beat
 When the Body of Christ goes down the street.
 These things and the like were heard and shown
 In a moment's trance 'neath the sea alone ;
 And when I rose, 'twas the sea did seem,
 And not these things, to be all a dream.
 The ship was gone and the crowd was gone ;
 And the deep shuddered and the moon shone.....

The prison life of James I of Scotland is thus sketched in
The King's Tragedy :

—in all things meet for a kingly man
 Himself did he approve ;
 And the nightingale through his prison-wall
 Taught him both lore and love.
 For once, when the bird's song drew him close
 To the opened window-pane,
 In her bower beneath a lady stood,
 A light of life to his sorrowful mood,
 Like a lily amid the rain.

 But the bird may fall from the bough of youth,
 And song be turned to moan,
 And Love's storm-cloud be the shadow of Hate,
 When the tempest-waves of a troubled State
 Are beating against a throne.

Rossetti is not comparable with Morris in respect of
 lengthy enumerations of the features of lonely wastes or solitary
 places. Yet the following passages are worth noticing as revealing
 this characteristic in some measure :

Here dawn to-day unveiled her magic glass :
 Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew ;
 Till eve bring rest when other good things pass.
 And here the lost hours the lost hours renew
 While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass,
 Nor know, for longing, that which I should do.*

* *Autumn Idleness.*

Between Holmscote and Hurstcote
 The river's flecked with foam,
 'Neath shuddering clouds that hang in shrouds
 And lost winds wild for home ;
 With infant wailings at the breast,
 With homeless steps astray,
 With wanderings shuddering tow'rds one rest
 On this year's first of May.*

Rossetti's accuracy in depicting minutiae, especially in his earlier work, is traceable to the Pre-Raphaelite influence which he later shook off. But there are passages in Rossetti's later work which are full of details and not at all symbolic as very often his passages are. A railway journey is thus described:

Strong extreme speed, that the brain hurries with,
 Further than trees, and hedges, and green grass
 Whitened by distance, — further than small pools
 Held among fields and gardens, further than
 Haystacks and wind-mill-sails, and roofs and herds,—
 The sea's last margin ceases at the sun.†

The Burden of Nineveh is a good specimen reminscent of the Pre-Raphaelite fondness for details in poetry. The following lines may serve as illustration :

The consecrated metals found,
 And ivory tablets, underground,
 Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd,
 When air and daylight filled the mound,
 Fell into dust immediately.
 And even as these, the images
 Of awe and worship, —even as these, —
 So, smitten with the sun's increase,
 Her glory mouldered and did cease
 From immemorial Nineveh.

Here there is some resemblance with the Pre-Raphaelite poetry of Morris who thus portrays Colchis with its background of pasture and hamlets, which the Argonauts saw at a distance from their ship :

— they went betwixt the shores
 Against the ebb, and now full oft espied
 Trim homesteads here and there on either side,
 And fair kine grazing, and much woolly sheep,

* *Down Stream.*

† *A Trip to Paris and Belgium, II.*

And skin-clad shepherds, roused from mid-day sleep,
Gazing upon them with scared wondering eyes.*

Apart from punctuation of details, Rossetti has touches of skilful pictorial art, in which flowing outlines, shades of colours and beauty of imagery are most attractive, and it has rightly been remarked that landscape is almost always pictorially conceived by him. The following lines may serve as illustration :

Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart
Sheds doubled darkness up the labouring hill.

This picture of a flight of starlings is admirable ;

Sun-steeped in fire, the homeward pinions sway

Above the dovecote-tops ;

And clouds of starlings, ere they rest with day,

Sink, clamorous like mill-waters, at wild play,

By turns in every copse ;

Each tree heart-deep the wrangling rout receives,—

Save for the whirr within,

You could not tell the starlings from the leaves ;

Then one great puff of wings, and the swarm heaves

Away with all its din.†

A feeling for mystery is another aspect of the attitude of Rossetti to nature and human beings. This cannot be attributed to Morris or other Pre-Raphærites. Their perception circumscribes their imagination which does not travel beyond the obvious.

Thus Rossetti has a fondness for the imagery of fierce still radiance of sunshine, as suggested in lines like the following :

—beyond all depth away

The heat lies silent at the brink of day.‡

This is similar to the impression of the background landscape in several of his pictures like *Dante's Dream* which show glimpses of life stilled beneath sunlight. As a contrast, Rossetti also uses the imagery of "wan waters and failing light." Nearly every image in *Without Her* is an attractive picture, typical of Rossetti's preference for shadowy night or twilight hue, *e.g.*,

What of her glass without her? The blank grey

There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.

Her dress without her? The tossed empty space

Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.

**The Life and Death of Jason*, BK. VI.

†*Sunset Wings*.

‡*For a Venetian Pastoral*, by Giorgione.

In Rossetti colour is sometimes purely decorative, and the effect is just like that of "rich dress or deeply dyed wood in panelled rooms." Often is noticed a "perfumed forlorn loveliness" which is cloying and almost enervating.

Rossetti's *Rose Mary* has a peculiar charm, due wholly to colour-effects; the great Beryl scatters rich and variegated hues:

With shuddering light 'twas stirred and strewn
Like the cloud-nest of the wading moon:
Freaked it was as the bubble's ball,
Rainbow-hued through a misty pall
Like the middle light of the waterfall.

When it is replaced in its wrappings, the wizard music which heralded its disclosure again comes upon the air, and is represented as an appeal to the eye:

As the globe slid to its silken gloom,
Once more a music rained through the room;
Low it splashed like a sweet star-spray,
And sobbed like tears at the heart of May,
And died as laughter dies away.

Apart from skill in word-painting, the Pre-Raphaelites are noted for what has been called the tapestry-method. Morris's *Earthly Paradise* has been described as "a tapestry woven of over 42,000 lines of rhymed verse." *The Life and Death of Jason* too is full of examples of tapestry-weaving. Morris, it has been remarked, was not really writing his tales in English verse. "First and last, he was weaving them in tapestry. His lines are thin threads, he cares not how thin. Tennyson might compress twenty or more syllables into an iambic pentameter; Morris very rarely exceeds the ten, and very thin ones at that. He often seems in this regard to be deliberately aiming at an idea directly opposite to that of all other poets, and to be deliberately drawing out his lines to their utmost tenuity."* The thinness of the lines compels the reader to read them syllable by syllable, with the right air of slow and dreamy simplicity. The description of the palace of King Æetes is looked upon as a fine example of Morris's tepestry-method:

The pillars, made the mighty roof to hold,
The one was silver and the next was gold
All down the hall; the roof, of some strange wood
Brought over sea, was dyed as red as blood,

*Alfred Noyes: *William Morris*, p. 51.

Set thick with silver flowers, and delight
 Of intertwining figures wrought aright.
 With richest webs the marble walls were hung,
 Picturing sweet stories by the poets sung
 From ancient days, so that no wall seemed there,
 But rather forests black and meadows fair,
 And streets of well-built towns, with tumbling seas
 About their marble wharves and palaces ;
 And fearful crags and mountains ; and all trod
 By changing feet of giant, nymph and God,
 Spear-shaking warrior and slim-ankled maid.*

Rossetti's earlier style was marked by simplicity and naïveté of phrase and conception. But this was succeeded by another style which was conspicuous for "gorgeous word-textures, strange tapestries of language and colour." †This appears in *The House of Life* and other later pieces which have been compared to "some gorgeous confection to which a hundred strange exotic products have contributed their scents and savours." The following stanza from *The Bride's Prelude* reveals Rossetti's style of tapestry-weaving with thin lines:—

Although the lattice had dropped loose,
 There was no wind ; the heat
 Being so at rest that Amelotte
 Heard far beneath the plunge and float
 Of a hound swimming in the moat.

 Some minutes since, two rooks had toiled
 Home to the nests that crowned
 Ancestral ash-trees. Through the glare
 Beating again, they seemed to tear
 With that thick caw the woof o' the air.

 But else, 'twas at the dead of noon
 Absolute silence ; all,
 From the raised bridge and guarded sconce
 To green-clad places of pleasaunce
 Where the long lake was white with swans.
 To cite another illustration of this style :
 I gaze until she seems to stir,—
 Until mine eyes almost aver
 That now, even now, the sweet lips part

**The Life and Death of Jason*, BK. VI.

†Benson : *Rossetti*, p. 83.

To breathe the words of the sweet heart :—
 And yet the earth is over her.
 Alas ! even such the thin-drawn ray
 That makes the prison-depths more rude,—
 The drip of water night and day
 Giving a tongue to solitude.
 Yet only this, of love's whole prize,
 Remains ; save what in mournful guise
 Take counsel with my soul alone, —
 Save what is secret and unknown,
 Below the earth, above the skies.

 Only in solemn whispers now
 At night-time these things reach mine ear ;
 When the leaf-shadows at a breath
 Shrink in the road, and all the heath,
 Forest and water, far and wide,
 In limpid starlight glorified,
 Lie like the mystery of death.*

It is sometimes said that Rossetti is the most pictorial of poets, and the most literary of painters. The truth of the second part of the statement cannot be disputed. But exception has been taken to the first, and it has been urged that he is not so pictorial a poet as Keats, Tennyson or William Morris. *The House of Life*, the most characteristic work of Rossetti, it has been pointed out, is in no sense pictorial as poetry, and "the half-length designs of mystical women,"† the most characteristic specimens of his paintings, have not inspired corresponding literary creation by him.

Yet it is true that poetry and painting by Rossetti have points of contact. "He lived strongly in both worlds; he drew designs for his poems, and he wrote sonnets for his pictures."‡ Pictorial poetry inspired by painting, or having pictures as theme has undoubtedly been written by him. There is a series of sonnets by him on pictures by eminent painters like Michelangelo, Botticelli, Giorgione, Hans Memmelinck, Leonardo da Vinci and Burne-Jones. He has also written sonnets and verses for his own works of art, like *Mary's Girlhood*, *Pandora*, *Astarte Syriaca*, *Venus Verticordia*, and *Fiammetta*. *Eden Bower* is based on the legend of Lilith, the subject of a painting by Rossetti himself. There are also a few poems in Italian and in English, which were suggested by pictures, e.g., *Proserpina*, and *La Bella Mano*.

**The Portrait*.

†Benson : *Rossetti*, p 176.

‡*Ibid* , p. 176.

What is more important is the adoption of the pictorial method by Rossetti in poems not inspired by paintings. This means, as already explained, the use of visual imagery involving contrast of colours, and of light and shade, flowing outlines and minute details necessary for bringing out characteristic features and forms.

In this context it is to be noted that pictorialism has been both the merit and the defect of Rossetti's poetry. While it has rendered it more colourful and sensuous, and has introduced variety into what might otherwise have been drab and commonplace, it has partly taken away from its realism. Rossetti joined Holman Hunt as a pupil in a London studio which was dismal and squalid, looked upon a timber-yard and had a boys' school attached. The work he was asked to do was disliked by him. His friendship with Millais brought him to a shed-like studio at the back of his London house, where he saw execrable engravings of the frescoes by early masters in the Campo Santo at Pisa. Rossetti was thus shut out of direct contact with nature. In the first years of his training except for just a few visits to the country, and a few weeks at Boulogne, he knew nothing of the freshness of the countryside. His was a sensitive soul with an instinct for beauty, but his experience was insufficient and disappointing. "So eager an eye for beauty is bound to feed itself upon what it sees, and one can imagine Rossetti, like Leonardo da Vinci, wandering about the streets in search of rare and remote types of human expression."* Also he took in impressions of what he read about landscapes, trees and flowers or saw in prints or engravings. Hence "the landscape both in his pictures and poems is rather of the pictorial than of the natural order,—imagined ideal places, gardens seen in dreams, with a tender light of evening over lawns and thick-grown trees."† Natural objects are not indeed realised as things of beauty nor are interpreted as such by youth, but the habit of observation must be acquired early. This was not possible for Rossetti in London. Thus "Rossetti's natural imagery does not rise, as it were, out of a full source." In other words, Rossetti lived in a world of dreams—of books and pictures—and not in the midst of reality even when he painted or wrote pictorial poetry.

There is one more point of difference between Morris and Rossetti besides what has already been discussed. This produced a difference in their mental make-up and outlook which eventually had their influence on their literary work, though the connection is not quite apparent. Love of medievalism in the two poets has

*Benson : *Rossetti*, p. 16.

†Benson : *Ibid.*, p. 16.

already been distinguished. Social sympathy in Morris is something to which there is no parallel in Rossetti. However kind to friends, he had no interest in national affairs nor in the condition of contemporary society. Part of this indifference or unsocial outlook was undoubtedly due to his Italian origin as against Morris's Welsh descent. "I can't say," Morris wrote, "how it was that Rossetti (he was dead at the time) took no interest in politics, but so it was; of course, he was quite Italian in his general turn of thought, though I think he took less interest in Italian politics than in English, in spite of his knowing several of the leading patriots personally".* But Rossetti's aloofness must have also been largely due to his personal inclination to art and aestheticism which looked upon the creation and enjoyment of beauty as the *Summum Bonum* of life. Growing up in a house where political exiles met and argued about politics from dawn to dark, would only intensify his disposition to shut the subject out of his mind.

Though aestheticism was strong in Morris, too, he had an innate love of fairness and equality. Marx's *Capital* and Wallace's *Land Nationalisation* attracted him, and he used to read More's *Utopia* aloud at Kelmscott. The influence of these led him by slow stages to Radicalism. He was appointed Secretary to the National Liberal League, and he joined the Democratic Federation about 1881. Its programme was alteration in the machinery of government and also nationalisation of land.

It is important to notice how Morris's interest in the arts was responsible for his politics. In a lecture he delivered in 1884 he said,† "The cause of art is the cause of the people. We well-to-do people, those of us who love art, not as a toy, but as a thing necessary to the life of man, have for our best work the raising of the standard of life among the people. How can we of the middle classes, we the capitalists and our hangers-on help? By renouncing our class, and on all occasions, when antagonism rises up between the classes casting in our lot with the victims, those who are condemned at the best to lack of education, refinement, leisure, pleasure and renown; and at the worst, to a life lower than that of the most brutal of savages. There is no other way." Morris supported the cause of the masses because this was at bottom "the cause of art."

On the disruption of the Democratic Federation, the Socialist League made its appearance, and Morris was one of its promoters.

*Mackail: *The Life of William Morris*, pp. 141.

†Mackail: *The Life of William Morris*, p. 139. See also pp. 145-6.

In consequence he was subjected to personal attacks in the press and denounced for inconsistency and hypocrisy in being a socialist and a capitalist manufacturer at the same time, having several flourishing businesses and employing a large number of labourers. To the demand that he should rank with the proletariat and dissociate himself from capitalistic industry, he replied, ".....we are not able to do so.....the most we can do is to palliate, as far as we can, the evils of the unjust system which we are forced to sustain ; we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible organization of competitive commerce, and only the complete unriveting of that chain will really free us."* But he decided to offer financial help to the League.

Morris's own workmen were not at all critical of his politics. The attacks came from educated people ignorant of his services to the labouring classes. The foundation of guilds inspired, and often actively helped, by Morris had been a step in the direction of organization of labour and had infused into its ranks a sense of self-respect and self-confidence. They were working towards more humanised conditions of life of the toiling masses. There were many who came directly under Morris's influence, and his ideas took definite shape as a body of doctrines in their minds. And this came to be widely diffused amongst younger generations of craftsmen and industrial workers. The cause of social equality and of socialism was thus largely promoted by the activities and teachings of Morris. There were few of the craftsmen in the organized unions who would not have readily acknowledged Morris as their Master.

Morris's social sympathy was not confined to his own countrymen or to Europeans. It is a proof of his sincerity of conviction that he came to have the same feelings for other races and peoples in other countries. Their origin was political, and was traceable to the atrocities committed on the backward inhabitants of Eastern Europe, which were exploited by the socialist party in England. But Morris felt really uneasy and threw himself heart and soul into the movement which led to the foundation of the Eastern Question Association of which he became the Treasurer. In the Manifesto issued in May, 1877 on the declaration of War by Russia against Turkey, *To the working men of England*, he said, "Who are they that are leading us into war? Greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and the navy, worn-out mockers of

*Mackail : *The Life of William Morris*, pp. 155-56.

the clubs, desperate purveyors of exciting war-news for the comfortable breakfast-tables of those who have nothing to lose by war... .. Shame and double shame, if we march under such leadership as this in an unjust war against a people who are not our enemies, against Europe, against freedom, against nature, against the hope of the world."* Morris tried equally strenuously to prevent England's Afghan campaign, though without success. This feeling of human sympathy for all irrespective of colour and creed was a remarkable feature of the character of Morris and constituted its undoubted nobleness.

Its absence in the case of Rossetti had its reaction on his poetry. Mention has elsewhere been made of concentration of mind on objects of vision. Its effect has been close perception of details of form, outline and hues but neglect of the deeper and finer reality. Sympathy and social work are the outcome of the realisation of this, *i.e.*, of the essential spiritual quality of nature and man. Recognition of this really furnishes the link between man and man, and in the domain of literary creation is responsible for the conception of personality and character and for the interpretation of motives and action so important in narratives. Absence of social activities and of the feeling of kinship with human beings, makes the mind recoil on itself. It tries to establish in the inner sphere the contacts which would otherwise have been manifested in the outerworld of philanthropy and social activity. This explains the origin of introspection and of the complex, profound and mysterious activities of the human soul.

Intense passion, symbolism and a sense of mystery in Rossetti should be looked upon as an illustration of this truth. The unsophisticated attitude of Morris to life, his social instincts and simple narratives corresponding to the normal activities of man as a social being, also bring this out. What has been transformed and canalised in Rossetti's poetry, appears in one sense in its original and diffuse form in William Morris's.

*Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, p. 109.

LECTURE VI

Swinburne

(SWINBURNE is a representative of Neo-Romanticism which includes within itself the most diverse inspirations. He continues the spirit of Byron, Shelley and Keats who are associated with the Romantic Revival and are called Romantics, and hence his themes often echo theirs and generally include love of freedom, sympathy for oppressed nations, hostility to religious creed, and love of sensuous beauty and of Pagan civilization. But he adds to these tendencies some new ones. He is against the subjection of literature to the demands and tastes of social life and in favour of the frank admission of "passional subjects to the domain of art."*) This latter connects him with what has been called the Fleshly School of Poetry. For a time the direct influence of Pre-Raphaelitism is on him, so far as artistic expression is concerned, and interest in the colourful Middle Ages forms part of his mental make-up.)

(Swinburne has been called "the spoilt child of the Pre-Raphaelite group, at once its prodigy and its embarrassment".) His association with the group included his friendship for D. G. Rossetti, and for Morris who was his contemporary at Oxford, and his admiration for Burne-Jones. Swinburne had become so worshipping a disciple of Rossetti that Burne-Jones once said, "Now we were four in company, not three." He constantly saw these friends, "going even three times a day to Burne-Jones and often taking poems to repeat". The First Series of *Poems and Ballads* was "affectionately and admiringly dedicated" to Burne-Jones. These friendships and contacts had their effect, and Swinburne explains how his pictorial instincts were developed by them—and his "lifelong delight in the forces of an art which is not my own," was quickened by the intercourse of many years with eminent artists.

(Though Swinburne could not be a painter, the art of these Pre-Raphaelites influenced his literary taste. This is noticeable in his early prose where he engages in word-painting. His book on Blake with its descriptions of pictures, encouraged Swinburne to indulge in pictorial delineation. Representation of pictures in his prose is remarkable. To take an illustration: "Dante and Virgil, standing in a niche of rifted rock faced by another cliff up and

*E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *A History of English Literature*, p. 1258.

down which a reptile crowd of spirits swarms and sinks, looking down on the grovelling and swine-like flocks of Malebolge; lying tumbled about the loathsome land in hateful heaps of leprous flesh and dishevelled deformity, with limbs contorted, clawing nails, and staring horror of hair and eyes."

Visual impression revived in the following passages is really unique for light, shade and substantiality :

"The dark hard strength and sweep of its sterile ridges."

"Washed about with surf and froth of tideless fire, and heavily laden with the lurid languor of hell.")

Swinburne's *Essays and Studies* contains descriptions of some of Rossetti's and Burne-Jones's pictures, and their pictorial characteristics are quite obvious. The following is his pen-picture of Lilith :

"Clothed in soft white garments, she draws out through a comb the heavy mass of hair like thick spun gold to fullest length; her head leans back half sleepily, superb and satiate with its own beauty; the eyes are languid, without love in them or hate; the sweet luxurious mouth has the patience of pleasure fulfilled and complete, the warm repose of passion sure of its delight."

Pre-Raphaelite painting was, as is well known, founded on that of the early Italians, and Swinburne's visit to Italy and the opportunity he thus obtained of studying the works of the old school, confirmed his interest in it. He visited Florence in the spring of 1864, and the outcome was his chapters on pictures in *Essays and Studies*, one of which consists of "Notes on Designs of the old Masters at Florence." Here are found quite impressive translations of pictures into words. Of a drawing by Michelangelo, he writes :

"Broad bracelets divide the shapely splendour of her arms; over the nakedness of her firm and luminous breasts, just below the neck, there is passed a band as of metal. Her eyes are full of proud and passionless lust after gold and blood; her hair, close and curled, seems ready to shudder in sunder and divide into snakes. Her throat, full and fresh, round and hard to the eye as her bosom and arms, is erect and stately, the head set firm on it without any droop or lift of the chin; her mouth crueller than a tiger's, colder than a snake's, and beautiful beyond a woman's. She is the deadlier Venus incarnate.....Lamia re-transformed, invested now with a fuller beauty, but divested of all feminine attributes not native to the snake—a Lamia loveless and unassailable by the Sophist, readier to drain life out of her lover than to fade for his sake at his side."*

*E. Thomas, *Algernon Charles Swinburne*, p 66.

Apart from the impression of Pre-Raphaelite painting on Swinburne, there was also the attraction of the Pre-Raphaelite poetry of Rossetti for the young man. He knew intimately Rossetti's poems on pictures, and admired *The Song of the Bower* :

Shall I not one day remember thy bower,
One day when all days are one day to me?
Thinking, "I stirred not, and yet had the power,—"
Yearning, "Ah God, if again it might be!"

Peace, peace! such a small lamp illumines, on this highway,
So dimly so few steps in front of my feet,—
Yet shows me that her way is parted from my way.....
Out of sight, beyond light, at what goal may we meet?

This anticipates Swinburne's poetry itself. Morris, the poet, equally cast his spell on Swinburne. Lines like

Where the wind set the silken kings asway
or
Made sad by dew and wind, and tree-barred moon
or
.....In Avalon asleep,
Among the poppies and the yellow flowers

have close parallels in Swinburne's work. His memory of verses composed during the first period of Morris's authorship enabled Swinburne to quote them accurately in reviewing *Jason* and say, "Such verses are not forgettable." In 1862, Swinburne even published a story in the manner of Morris's early romances.

The specific influence of Pre-Raphaelitism (in painting) on English poetry consisted of such matters as delineation of details in clear outlines, contrast of colours and a strong appeal to the sense of sight, though without any corresponding intellectual or spiritual promptings. These are also noticeable in Swinburne's early poetry, if not to the same extent as in Rossetti's or Morris's. These latter do not however possess identical characteristics. Morris was attracted by the spectacular in the Middle Ages, their decorative arts and colourful life, while Rossetti loved more the mysticism and the symbolism that had impressed mediaeval religious thought. The influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Swinburne's poetry, however, did not continue long. According to Laurence Binyon, it lasted only from 1857 to 1860, when Swinburne developed other poetic qualities. Melody, and not clear outline, and sound rather than visual impression became the main marks of his later verse. Poems bearing Pre-Raphaelite characteristics appeared in the First Series of *Poems and*

Ballads, though it was published as late as in 1866. Clear outlines and images of taste, touch, smell and colour appear in the portrayal of Aholibah :—

Strange raiment clad thee like a bride,
With silk to wear on hands and feet
And plates of gold on either side :
Wine made thee glad, and thou didst eat
Honey, and choice of pleasant meat.
And fishers in the middle sea
Did get thee sea-fish and sea-weeds
In colour like the robes on thee ;
And curious work of plaited reeds,
And wools wherein live purple bleeds.
And round the edges of thy cup
Man wrought thee marvels out of gold,
Strong snakes with lean throats lifted up,
Large eyes whereon the brows had hold,
And scaly things their slime kept cold.
For thee they blew soft wind in flutes
And ground sweet roots for cunning scent ;
Made slow because of many lutes,
The wind among thy chambers went
Wherein no light was violent.

There is luscious poetry in the portrayal of the church of Venus in *St. Dorothy* :

The chapels of it were some two or three,
In each of them her tabernacle was
And a wide window of six feet in glass
Coloured with all her works in red and gold.
The altars had bright cloths and cups to hold
The wine of Venus for the services,
Made out of honey and crushed wood-berries
That shed sweet yellow through the thick wet red,
That on high days was borne upon the head
Of Venus' priest for any man to drink ;.....

Equally pictorial and clear in outline is the description of the creation of this beautiful world by God who

—with the fingers of his hand doth bend
The stretched-out sides of heaven like a sail,
And with his breath he maketh the red pale
And fills with blood faint faces of men dead,

And with the sound between his lips are fed
 Iron and fire and the white body of snow,
 And blossom of all trees in places low,
 And small bright herbs about the little hills,
 And fruit pricked softly with birds' tender bills,
 And flight of foam about green fields of sea,
 And fourfold strength of the great winds that be
 Moved always outward from beneath his feet,
 And growth of grass and growth of sheavèd wheat
 And all green flower of goodly-growing lands.....

Sensuousness is the chief characteristic of *The Sundew*. The art may not be mature, but clearness of delineation and a distinct appeal to sight, scent and touch are evident. In one little stanza are juxtaposed "green," "red" and "faint black." In another occur the images of "cool moss," "long June heat" and "summer:"

A little marsh-plant, yellow green,
 And pricked at lip with tender red.
 Tread close, and either way you tread
 Some faint black water jets between
 Lest you should bruise the curious head

 A live thing may be ; who shall know ?
 The summer knows and suffers it ;
 For the cool moss is thick and sweet
 Each side, and saves the blossom so
 That it lives out the long June heat.

 The deep scent of the heather burns
 About it ; breathless though it be,
 Bow down and worship.....

A Match has melody and rhythm which point to the characteristic merit of Swinburne's later poetry, but it has also imagery in which passion and sensuous beauty are intertwined and blended together :

If love were what the rose is,
 And I were like the leaf,
 Our lives would grow together
 In sad or singing weather,
 Blown fields or flowerful closes,
 Green pleasure or grey grief ;
 If love were what the rose is,
 And I were like the leaf.

...

If you were life, my darling,
 And I your love were death,
 We'd shine and snow together
 Ere March made sweet the weather
 With daffodil and starling
 And hours of fruitful breath ;
 If you were life, my darling,
 And I your love were death.

... ..

If you were April's lady,
 And I were lord in May,
 We'd throw with leaves for hours
 And draw for days with flowers,
 Till day like night were shady
 And night were bright like day ;
 If you were April's lady,
 And I were lord in May.

Rococo can be paralleled with *A Match* in respect of melody and rhythm, though it has less of sensuousness. But the short, tenuous lines have been strung together in order to produce clear and distinct poetic images well marked out in the different stanzas. The "tapestry-method" has not been very effective, as the images are not wholly visual, but there is not much of indistinctness or haziness so noticeable often in Swinburne's later poetry :

We have heard from hidden places
 What love scarce lives and hears ;
 We have seen on fervent faces
 The pallor of strange tears ;
 We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,
 Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
 Foams round the feet of pleasure
 The blood-red must of pain.

... ..

The snake that hides and hisses
 In heaven we twain have known ;
 The grief of cruel kisses,
 The joy whose mouth makes moan ;
 The pulse's pause and measure,
 Where in one furtive vein
 Throbs through the heart of pleasure
 The purpler blood of pain.

... ..

Life treads down love in flying,
 Time withers him at root :
 Bring all dead things and dying,
 Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,
 Where, crushed by three days' pressure,
 Our three days' love lies slain ;
 And earlier leaf of pleasure,
 And latter flower of pain.*

Vividness of touch in the delineation of physical features in lines like the following, inevitably recalls portrait-painting :

I know each shadow of your lips by rote,
 Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows ;
 The fashion of fair temples tremulous
 With tender blood, and colour of your throat ;
 I know not how love is gone out of this,
 Seeing that all was his.

... ..

I know not how this last month leaves your hair
 Less full of purple colour and hid spice,
 And that luxurious trouble of closed eyes
 Is mixed with meaner shadow and waste care ;
 And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet
 Worth patience to regret. (*Before Parting*)

The graphic qualities of *Faustine* are such as might have been suggested by a highly-finished portrait ; but it has been remarked that the poem was possibly prompted by Swinburne's own description in prose of D.G. Rossetti's *Lilith* (quoted previously),

Faustine's sensuous beauty and its withering effects are thus brought out :

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,
 Weighed over clean
 With state of splendid hair that droops
 Each side, Faustine.

... ..

Bright heavy brows well gathered up :
 White gloss and sheen ;
 Carved lips that make my lips a cup
 To drink, Faustine,
 Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,
 Being mixed therein
 Since first the devil threw dice with God

**Poems and Ballads*, First Series, pp. 116-17.

For you, Faustine,

 I know what queen at first you were,
 As though I had seen
 Red gold and black imperious hair
 Twice crown Faustine.
 As if your fed sarcophagus
 Spared flesh and skin,
 You come back face to face with us,
 The same Faustine.

The Masque of Queen Bersabe is a miracle play and includes a pageant of fair women. The pageant was a form of medieval entertainment with features characteristic of the variegated life of the age. Its love of colours, shows and phantasmagoria were well reflected in the device. They appealed only to the eye, and had nothing to do with another aspect of the mediaeval epoch—its mystical thought and symbolism which did not seek popularity and had no visible manifestation and which captivated Rossetti but not Morris. The scope for pictorial description in the Pre-Raphaelite style is very wide in pageants, and this is borne out in *The Masque* of Swinburne. Says Cleopatra :

I am the queen of Ethiope.
 Love bade my kissing eyelids ope
 That men beholding might praise love.
 My hair was wonderful and curled ;
 My lips held fast the mouth o' the world
 To spoil the strength and speech thereof.
 The latter triumph in my breath
 Bowed down the beaten brows of death,
 Ashamed they had not wrath enough.

Abihail says :

I am the queen of Tyrians.
 My hair was glorious for twelve spans,
 That dried to loose dust afterward.
 My stature was a strong man's length :
 My neck was like a place of strength
 Built with white walls, even and hard.
 Like the first noise of rain leaves catch
 One from another, snatch by snatch,
 Is my praise, hissed against and marred.

Swinburne's poem *Queen Yseult* illustrates once more his Pre-Raphaelitism and the influence of Morris both in style and subject-matter. The poem opens with the death of Tristram's mother :

There men found her as they sped

Very beautiful and dead,

In the lilies white and red.

And beside her lying there,

Found a manchild strong and fair

Lain among the lilies bare.....

Queen Yseult's beauty is painted in the narration of Tristram's embassy to fetch her :

Spake the King so lean and cold,

"She hath name of honour old,

Yseult queen, the hair of gold.

All her limbs are fair and strong,

All her face is straight and long,

And her talk is as a song.

And faint lines of colour stripe

(As spilt wine that one should wipe)

All her golden hair cornripe

Drawn like red gold ears that stand

In the yellow summer land ;

Arrow-straight her perfect hand.

And her eyes like river-lakes

Where a gloomy glory shakes

Which the happy sunset makes*.

The poem occurs in an issue of the "Undergraduate Papers" which Swinburne began writing and publishing in his first year at Oxford. The "Undergraduate Papers" of 1857 and 1858 contain both verse and prose by Swinburne, and Tennyson's *Idylls* did not appear till the next year (1859.)

Pre-Raphaelitism in Swinburne's poetry was short-lived, as the poet went beyond this movement. He extended its original limits in one sense, for he brought into picturesque poetry a broader interest and a greater emotional intensity. The afterglow of Pre-Raphaelitism, however, continued long, though abstract images were introduced later on, *e g.*, in *Songs before Sunrise*. Generally these do

*This last stanza seems to have wandered in from Tennyson's
The long light shakes across the lakes
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

not print themselves on the mind of the reader with the edge and sting of *Poems and Ballads* (First Series). Nevertheless they try to revive visual memory of the beauty of form and colour, however indistinct it may be. The Second Series of *Poems and Ballads* is remarkable for hard thought, and stands on a different footing from the First. But even in his idealistic and thoughtful poems Swinburne tries to reflect the glow of his imagination on nature, and bring out a sort of parallelism between the inner and the outer world. In the magnificent *A Song of Italy*, he piles image on image to glorify his theme, viz., the ideal of liberty and its great champion; he bids the winds, light, 'storm and summer,' sounds, floods, hills and valleys to praise Mazzini, and the great personality of the Italian patriot confers a sort of pictorial unity on them :

Praise him, O winds that move the molten air,
 O light of days that were,
 And light of days that shall be ; land and sea,
 And heaven and Italy :
 Praise him, O storm and summer ; shore and wave,
 O skies and every grave ;
 O weeping hopes, O memories beyond tears,
 O many and murmuring years,
 O sounds far off in time and visions far,
 O sorrow without thy star,
 And joy with all thy beacons ; ye that mourn,
 And ye whose light is born ;
 O fallen faces, and O souls arisen,
 Praise him from tomb and prison,
 Praise him from heaven and sunlight, and ye floods,
 And windy waves of woods ;.....

Sometimes the objects addressed are of totally different classes, and "some are treated with a fancy natural to the poet and both brilliant and appropriate." One wonders whether the following can be pictorially represented on the canvas :

Red hills of flame, white Alps, green Apennines,
 Banners of blowing pines,
 Standards of stormy snows, flags of light leaves,
 Three wherewith Freedom weaves
 One ensign that once woven and once unfurled
 Makes day of all a world,
 Makes blind their eyes who knew not, and outbraves
 The waste of iron waves ;

Ye fields of yellow fullness, ye fresh fountains,
And mists of many mountains;*

Where the lines of verse are shorter and more tenuous and the images are copious, what is called the tapestry-method is clearly evident. The impression is indeed partly defaced by Swinburne's "characteristic mixture of precision and obscurity" and of the abstract and the concrete; yet the total graphic effect is not spoiled. To take the following from *The Halt before Rome* :

Surely the day is on our side,
And heaven, and the sacred sun ;
Surely the stars, and the bright
Immemorial inscrutable night :
Yea, the darkness, because of our light,
Is no darkness, but blooms as a bower-side
When the winter is over and done ;
Blooms underfoot with young grasses
Green, and with leaves overhead,
Windflowers white, and the low
New-dropped blossoms of snow ;
And or ever the May winds blow,
And or ever the March wind passes,
Flames with anemones red.

✓ Swinburne's sea-poetry also deserves notice in this context. He loves the sea, the wind and the elemental forces with a less spiritual but more physical primitive passion than that of Shelley. Keats associates classical gods and goddesses with the sea and the powers of nature, and thus vivifies them. But Swinburne makes them the vehicles of modern thoughts, sentiments and ideals, and thus adds to their appeal to the modern mind.

✓ Swinburne loved swimming, and his love of the sea was certainly prompted by it. For a beautiful or a terrible comparison he had usually to go to the sea, and having gone there, he seemed to forget, certainly made others forget, why he had gone." In his prose description of Blake's verse he pictures the sea in its manifold aspects. "Blake's verse," he writes, "pauses and musters, and falls always as a wave does, with the same patience of gathering form, and rounded glory of springing curve, and sharp, sweet flash of dishevelled and flickering foam as it curls over, showing the sun through its soft heaving side in veins of gold that inscribe and jewels of green that inlay the quivering and sundering skirt or veil of thinner water, throwing upon the tremulous space of narrowing sea in front, like a

**Poems and Ballads*, First Series, p. 264.

reflection of lifted and vibrating hair, the windy shadow of its shaken spray."

Swinburne's sea poems reflect these manifold ways of looking at the sea. One critic has imputed to Swinburne "a sea-obsession" and remarked that his high creative impulse has, since *Mary Stuart*, been mainly devoted to the splendidly impossible feat of "providing continual lyrical change for the most monotonous theme in existence."* This means that Swinburne continuously varied his imagery to express different aspects of the sea under different circumstances. The remark is true to a certain extent and may be illustrated by reference to *Tristram of Lyonesse* and other poems. Tristram leapt towards the sea's breast with a cry of love "as toward a mother's where his head might rest." The imagery is suggested by the child's physical fondness for the mother. When he buffeted with the waves and swam,

The fleet foam round a joyous head
Flashed, that shot under, and ere a shaft had sped
Rose again radiant, a rejoicing star,
And high along the water-ways afar
Triumphed: and all they deemed he needs must die;
But Gouvernayle his squire, that watched hard by,
Sought where perchance a man might win ashore,
Striving, with strong limbs labouring long and sore,
And there abode an hour: till as from fight
Crowned with hard conquest won by mastering might,
Hardly, but happier for the imperious toil,
Swam the knight in forth of the close waves' coil,
Sea-satiate, bruised with buffets of the brine,
Laughing, and flushed as one afire with wine.†

Here the picture is one of victory in a fight. Swinburne's exultation in the sea has here a deeper source than mere visual satisfaction. "It is a passion exercising his whole physical no less than his spiritual nature, a passion that embraces worship and conflict and the desire of possession..." A great part of Swinburne's delight in the sea, it is often remarked, comes from the "actual physical conflict of swimming." This explains why in *Triumph of Time* Swinburne turns with joyous defiance from woman to the sea which is "a force responsive not to his aesthetic sense or spiritual inquiry, but to the need of his whole corporate being:"

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.

*E. Thomas, *Algernon Charles Swinburne*, p. 32.

†*Tristram of Lyonesse*, IV.

I will go down to her, I and none other,
 Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me ;
 Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast :
 O fair white mother, in days long past
 Born without sister, born without brother,
 Set free my soul as thy soul is free.
 O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
 Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
 Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
 Thy large embraces are keen like pain.

Again, the passion for the natural beauty of the earth, which is so strong in Swinburne, finds the most complete expression in his sea-poems ; the sea gives fullness to the picture of nature in which his pagan and sensuous instinct evinces so keen a delight. Tristram's soul

 desired the dewy sense of leaves,
 The soft green smell of thickets drenched with dawn.
 The faint slot kindling on the fiery lawn
 As day's first hour made keen the spirit again
 That lured and spurred on quest his hound Hodain,
 The breeze, the bloom, the splendour and the sound,
 That stung like fire the hunter and the hound.
 The pulse of wind, the passion of the sea,
 The rapture of the woodland :

As a boy the poet was nicknamed Seagull, which suggested the following lines in *To a Sea-Mew* :

When I had wings, my brother,
 Such wings were mine as thine :
 Such life my heart remembers
 In all as wild Septembers
 As this when life seems other,
 Though sweet, than once was mine ;
 When I had wings, my brother,
 Such wings were mine as thine.

 For you the storm sounds only
 More notes of more delight
 Than earth's in sunniest weather :
 When heaven and sea together
 Join strengths against the lonely
 Lost bark borne down by night,

For you the storm sounds only
 More notes of more delight.
 With wider wing, and louder
 Long clarion-call of joy,
 Thy tribe salutes the terror
 Of darkness, wild as error,
 But sure as truth, and prouder
 Than waves with man for toy;
 With wider wing, and louder
 Long clarion-call of joy.

In *A Channel Passage* (1855) occurs a fine description of one of the sublimest scenes of his life,—a night scene in the Channel; which Swinburne uses as a comparison for Victor Hugo whom he calls his lord and master—"the spiritual sovereign of the nineteenth century"—"the greatest man since Shakespeare." This scene is concerned with "forked and sheet lightning, of moonlight and phosphoric fire on the waters together"—"Artemis watching with a serene splendour of scorn the battle of Titans and the revel of nymphs, from her stainless and Olympian summit of divine indifferent light."

✓ Wind, snow, rose, wild leaf and shining light have been pressed into service in the following passage; but the impression, though fine, is a bit chaotic and uncertain:

.....the quick sea shone
 And shivered like spread wings of angels blown
 By the sun's breath before him; and a low
 Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow
 As into rainfall of sea-roses shed
 Leaf by wild leaf on that green garden-bed
 Which tempests till and sea-winds turn and plough;
 For rosy and fiery round the running prow
 Fluttered the flakes and feathers of the spray,
 And bloomed like blossoms cast by God away
 To waste on the ardent water.....

Swinburne's sea-poetry cannot be called highly pictorial. Generally it is lacking in colour-effects. Images of fire and light are therefore called in to supply the deficiency, and these are a constant source of inspiration to him. To take a few lines from *Hesperia*:

Out of the golden remote wild west
 where the sea without shore is,

Full of the *sunset*, and sad, if at all,
 with the fulness of joy,
 As a wind sets in with the autumn
 that blows from the region of stories,
 Blows with a *perfume of songs*
 and of memories beloved from a boy,
 Blows from the capes of the past
 oversea to the bays of the present,
 Filled as with shadow of *sound*
 with the pulse of invisible feet,
 Far out to the shallows and straits
 of the future, by rough ways or pleasant,
 Is it thither the wind's wings beat?
 is it hither to me, O my sweet?

The following passage illustrates how images associated with the sea get woven up with others, and the outcome is magnificent poetry, though flawless beauty is blended with questionable magniloquence :

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
 Change as the winds change, veer with the tide ;
 My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
 I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside ;
 Sleep, and know not if she be, if she were,
 Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
 As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips
 With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

Mention has been made how different kinds of imagery are blended in Keats's poetry. Images of colour, sound, taste and smell, for example, combine to constitute the splendid sensuousness of *The Eve of St. Agnes* the appeal of which is on this ground subtle and complex. A similar blending is noticeable in Swinburne's poetry too, although the images, as will be pointed out later, are not so distinct as in Keats's work. In the following lines sound and light alone are prominent almost to the exclusion of colour :

Spring *speaks* again, and all our woods are *stirred*,
 And all our wide glad wastes *afflower* around,
 That twice have *heard* keen April's clarion *sound*
 Since here we first together *saw* and *heard*
 Spring's *light* reverberate and reiterate *word*
 Shine forth and *speak* in season. Life stands crowned
 Here with the best one thing it ever found,
 As of my soul's best birthdays dawns the third.*

**Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems*, Introductory Poem

The picture of the sea-voyage of Iseult has the same characteristic of blended beauty as the above passage :

Above the stem a gilded swallow *shone*,
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering stone
As flying sunward oversea, to bear
Green summer with it through the *singing* air.
And on the deck between the rowers at *dawn*,
As the *bright* sail with *brightening* wind was drawn,
Sat with full face against the strengthening *light*
Iseult, more fair than foam or *dawn* was white.
Her gaze was glad past love's own *singing* of,
And her face lovely past desire of love.

(*Tristram of Lyonesse*)

✓ It has been pointed out that there is often a conflict between Swinburne's language and thought, that one does not exactly fit in with the other. "Language," says Drinkwater, "in its working has an independent life of its own, and it is by the strict adjustment of this life to the life of the poet's thought and vision that he achieves the perfect proportion of his art."* The language, of which Swinburne had become the master, was fixed and rigid even with all its rhythm, melody and manifold beauties, and not pliable or flexible. Apart from mannerisms, he had developed a special diction to which there is hardly any parallel in English poetry. His technical excellence manifested itself in a style full of antitheses, alliterations and contrasts of imagery in which there is a blending of the concrete and the abstract—of sound and sight. The inflexibility of his style led Swinburne "to force a mood and form together when there can be no just union."* The mood, if grave, reflective and placid, was twisted in its growth. Not only did he force the style into uses for which it was not shaped, but he was also betrayed into using it for its own sake.

Apart from the mood, his images too were disturbed as a result of rigidity of diction. The full picture did not come out and very often only parts of a mental picture were fitfully reflected. Even these were indistinct and smudged, as it were. This was largely due to the fact that his mind or imagination itself worked by fits and starts. It could not see life—or even the landscape—steadily and see it whole, nor was it capable of apprehending logical sequence and co-ordination.

Partly due to the examples of Gautier, Baudelaire and Victor Hugo, Swinburne's poetry attempts to seize the inner meaning of

*J. Drinkwater, *Swinburne*, p. 9.

natural forms, "to listen with a tranquil and meditative soul to their silent voice, to render emotions, in the same way, by transferred expressions, more interesting than direct ones."* Suggestion and not direct statement, is the ready instrument of his art, and it is found to be most suitable and helpful.

Subtle shades of ideas are sought to be caught by sounds of words, and a new technique is developed. This is no other than impressionism—the complement and habitual counterpart of symbolism. Here Rossetti was his predecessor, as Morris was his master in the domain of sheer picturesque poetry with colour-effects.

Sw Swinburne surrenders himself completely to the intoxication of language and of sounds, and these tackle single ideas independently through a series of unconnected impressions. There is no effort to follow any comprehensive rule or to string them together with any connecting link. There is no artistic judgment governing the whole representation as distinct from its parts. There is a profusion of images, paralleled by a profusion of words. These stand "at the very centre of the thoughts, like the main theme in a symphony."* It is through their meaning and chiefly through their colour and sound that they attract other words, and, by means of these again, other words and ideas. This poetic method makes use of sound at least as much as, if not more than, colour or form, as this passage will show :

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins. ✓

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.†

*E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *A History of English Literature*, p. 126.

†*Atalanta in Calydon*.

Swinburne differs from Spenser and Morris in that gay or gaudy colours are rare in his poetry apart from his early Pre-Raphaelite sketches. Desolate and sunless scenes are repeated to satiety and remind us of the solitary southern or the eastern coast of England. In *The Garden of Proserpine*, Swinburne sings:

Here, where the world is quiet ;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
 In doubtful dreams of dreams ;
I watch the green field growing
 For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
 A sleepy world of streams.

... ..
No growth of moor or coppice,
 No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
 Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes,
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
 For dead men deadly wine.

Lack-lustre pallor and melancholy mark the landscape in *The Forsaken Garden* :

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
 To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
 Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,
 Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
 Night and day.

... ..
Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not ;
 As the heart of a dead man the seed plots are dry ;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
 Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
 Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song ;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
 All year long.

The sun burns bare and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Here Swinburne has some affinity with the Saxon seamen in his love of the sea, the wind, and elemental forces and in his submission to the spell cast by drear, rugged and gloomy landscapes. The uninviting aspects of these are punctuated in lines like the following :

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea...

... ..

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?

LECTURE VII

Gerard Manley Hopkins

HOPKINS is a poet remarkable for his daring originality in metre, rhythm and vocabulary. He has not only coined new words and revolutionised versification, but has also been responsible for a new diction in which *inscape* and *instress*—as he names them—are prominent. Apart from sound-values, there are his subtle appreciation and expression of intrinsic ideas.

But it has not been noticed that there are in addition distinct pictorial qualities of his poetry. It appeals not only to the ear, to the thinking mind and to the imagination, but also revives visual images in abundance. The history of his literary work serves to throw some light on this point.

It is a striking fact, to which there is hardly any parallel, that Hopkins was at the same time a close observer of nature, a very careful and faithful recorder of its noticeable features, a maker of pencil sketches and drawings of natural objects and a writer of nature poetry. He travelled extensively in the midst of beautiful natural scenery in England and on the continent, especially in Switzerland which he visited before his noviciate. The closeness with which he observed details can be compared with Dorothy Wordsworth's, and their journals have points of similarity which are the outcome of close and minute observation.

Leaves, clusters of trees, or single, gaunt and tall trees, tree-trunks with spare branches, boulders and layers of rock, farm-houses and buildings, waterways with curling waves or flashes of foam, boat-race on the Cherwell, etc.—have been sketched by him in pencil in the pre-Raphaelite fashion. He has drawings against his journal-notes representing radiation of light, position of stars, masses of cloud, headlands, the rainbow and snowfall. Mediæval churches have been drawn by him in the manner of Ruskin. Hopkins's descriptions largely follow the Pre-Raphaelite literary technique, and his *Journal* is a rich treasure-house revealing pictorial opulence, though it also bears the reflection of Hopkins's inner life. The flow of water coming through locks is thus painted :—

“The water strikes through these with great force and extends

itself into three fans. The direction of the water is a little oblique from the horizontal, but the great force with which it runs keeps it almost uncurved except at the edges.”*

The green wheat suggests the remark :

“The difference between this green and that of long grass is that first suggests silver, latter azure.”

Detailed and picturesque descriptions of striking natural scenery are most characteristic of his genius. The valley (of the Aar), he writes, opens up “in cirques, amphitheatres enclosing levels of plain.” The Hendeck waterfall “is the greatest fall... . The lower half is hidden in spray. I watched the great bushes of foam-water, the texture of branchings and water-spandrils which makes them up. At their outsides nearest the rock they gave off showers of drops strung together into little quills which sprang out in fans.”†

Again, “across the valley too we saw the fall of the Gelmer—like milk chasing round blocks of coal; or a girdle or long purse of white weighted with irregular black rubies, carelessly thrown aside and lying in jutting bends, with a black clasp of the same stone at the top ...and the cascade enclosed them on the right and left hand with its foam; or once more like the skin of a white snake square-pied with black.” The Rhone glacier is thus described: “It has three stages—first a smoothly-moulded bed in a pan or theatre of thorny peaks, swells of ice rising through the snow-sheet and the snow itself tossing and fretting into the sides of the rock walls in spray-like points: this is the first stage of the glaciers generally: it is like bright-plucked water swaying in a pail—; second, after a slope nearly covered with landslips of moraine, was a ruck of horned waves steep and narrow in the gut: now in the upper Grindelwald glacier between the bed or highest stage was a descending limb which was like the rude and knotty bossings of a strombus shell—; third the foot, a broad limb opening out and reaching the plain, shaped like the fan—fin of a dolphin or a great bivalve shell turned on its face, the flutings in either case being suggested by the crevasses and the ribs by the risings between them, these being swerved and inscaped strictly to the motion of the mass. Or you may compare the three stages to the heel, instep, and ball or toes of a foot.”‡ Comparisons are numerous, and the images brought in, for purposes of parallelism or contrast, reveal the author’s power of observation.

**The Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. H. House, p. 7.

†*N. B. and P.*, p. 106.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 106.

It is surprising how the Matterhorn reminds Hopkins of a wrecked ship. The description throws light on the curious working of his mind: "The Matterhorn is like a Greek galley stranded, a reared-up rostrum—the sharp quains or *arrêtes* the gunwales, the deck of the forecastle looking upon Zermatt, the figurehead looking the other way reaching up in the air, the cutwater and ram descending and abutting on a long reef—the gable-length of the mountain."* The Breithorn which, with the Matterhorn, closes a valley, "is like a broad piece of hacked or knocked flintstone-flint of the half-chalky sort, for the mountain is covered with snow, while the breaks of rock remind one of the dark eyes or spots in the white; and this resemblance did not disappear even at much nearer".

Colour-effects, however subtle, do not escape Hopkins's notice. He looks for them in the sunrise and the sunset, and in the rainbow where most of the hues are present. Sensuous beauty has these as its most important elements, and Hopkins's early poetry bears ample traces of his visual memory of hues and tints. Describing sunrise at Chagford, he says, "There was a remarkable fan of clouds traced in fine horizontals.... Below appearing bright streaks which crowded up one after another. A white mist in the churchyard, trees ghostly in it." †At sunset the sky is orange: "trail of bronze-lit clouds, stars and streaks of brilliant electrum underneath.... Long rounded ridge of Dartmoor deep purple, then trees on the descending hill, and a field with an angle so that the upper level was lighter green, the lower darker, then a purplish great brown field, then the manufactory with grey white timbers... ." ‡Again, "A fine sunset: the higher sky dead clear blue bridged by a broad slant causeway rising from right to left of wisped or grass cloud, the wisps lying across; the sundown yellow, moist with light but ending at the top in a foam of delicate white pearling and spotted with big tufts of cloud in colour russet between brown and purple but edged with brassy light".§ The glory of moon-light is thus painted: "A lunar halo; I looked at it from the upstairs library window. It was a grave grained sky, the strands rising a little from left to right.... But this sober grey darkness and pale light was happily broken through by the orange of the pealing of Mitton bells. Another night from the gallery window

* *N. B. and P.*, p. 108.

†*Ibid.*, p. 48.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 49.

§*Ibid.*, p. 129.

I saw a brindled heaven, the moon just marked by a blue spot pushing its way through the darker cloud, underneath and on the skirts of the rack bold long flakes whitened and swaled like feathers, below the garden with the heads of the trees and shrubs furry grey.”*

The colourful rainbow which has captivated the imagination of millions is thus painted by Hopkins: “A double rainbow, and I noticed that the sky was darker between the two bows, so that the effect was that of a broad bridge with two coloured brims. It is no doubt the excess of the red colour that made the inside brownish and so of the purple outside.”†

Besides colour, Hopkins notices very closely outlines and forms of objects, and these suggest to him all sorts of reflections and let loose endless trains of thought. Erect figures of trees easily captivate his mind: “Some of our trees make a great gate opening over the park—two poplars for posts: on the left is the tallest of the cedars of more upright, less horizontal habit than the others, hive-shaped but set to one side by the wind; then, taller, the poplar beautifully touched with leaf against the sky and below these a tree with a mesh of leaves leaning away, beech and what not; here the break and distant oaks on a height in the park; then the other poplar, more gaunt and part strung and dead, and again other trees lower—Spanish chestnut and Turkey oak.”‡

Even the shapes of leaves, stones and clouds attract his attention: “This spring I have a good deal noticed the warp of the leaves, single or in the cluster, for instance in lime, and sycamoreAt sunset and later a strongly marked moulded rack. I made out the make of it, thus—cross-hatching in fact.....Those may have been scarves of cloud bellying upwards, but often I believe it is, as it looks in the perspective, downwards and then they may be curds or globes and solid, geometrical solids, that is, for all clouds are more or less cellular and hollow. Since that day.....I have noticed this kind of cloud: its brindled and hatched scaping, though difficult to catch, is remarkable when seen.”§

There are two remarkable pencil sketches of waves in the *Journal*. One is a study from the cliff above, at Freshwater Gate, of the curves of the returning wave. “They overlap; the angular space between is smooth but covered with a net-work of foam.....

**N. B. and P.*, p. 158.

†*Ibid.*, p. 160.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 185.

§*Ibid.*, p. 147.

The advancing wave already broken, and now only a mass of foam, upon the point of encountering the reflux of the former." The second is entitled "April 8. Day of the Boat race. On the Cherwell," and reveals a mass of blackish curling waves against a background of a white sheet of water.

Waves and breakers are beautifully and minutely described in a number of passages. Some of these are worth quoting :

"I saw big smooth flinty waves, curved and scuppled in shallow grooves, much swelling when the wind freshened, burst on the rocky spurs of the cliff at the little cove and break into bushes of foam. In an enclosure of rocks the peaks of the water romped and wandered and light crown of tufty scum standing high on the surface kept slowly turning round : chips of it blew off and gadded about without weight in the air."* Again,

"I was looking at high waves. The breakers always are parallel to the coast and shape themselves to it except where the curve is sharp however the wind blows. They are rolled out by the shallowing shore just as a piece of putty between the palms, whatever its shape, runs into a long roll. The slant ruck or crease one sees in them shows the way of the wind. The regularity of the barrels surprised and charmed the eye ; the edge behind the comb or crest was as smooth and bright as glass. It may be noticed to be green behind and silver white in front : the silver marks where the air begins, the pure white is foam, the green/solid water."†

The hues reflected by clouds have a greater glamour than the tints of leaves and flowers. Hopkins portrays the shifting changes in the colours of clouds as, driven by the wind, they make new formations. ".....in the plain of the Rhone approaching the lake white-rose clouds formed the ground of the sky, near the sundown taking straight ranks and gilded by the light ; in front heavy dark masses with their edges soaked red and fragments of bright thread." The effect of a strong wind on the cloudland is thus brought out : "The bright wool-packs that pelt before a gale in a clear sky are in the tuft, and you can see the wind unravelling and rending them finer than any sponge till within one easy reach overhead they are morselled to nothing and consumed." This is an anticipation of cloud-views in Hopkins's later poetry :

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows flaunt forth, then chevy on an air—

**N. B. and P.*, p. 181.

†*Ibid.*, p. 164.

built thoroughfare : heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs they throng ;
they glitter in marches. (*That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire*)

Tints of flowers have inspired the artistic instinct of almost every poet, and poets of the Keatsian and the pre-Raphaelite school have been especially attracted by these. Hopkins's detailed description of a few species of flowers may be quoted : "Found some daffodils wild but fading. You see the squareness of the scaping wall when you have several in your hand. The bright yellow corolla is seeded with very fine spangles (like carnations etc.) which give it a glister and lie on a ribbing which makes it like cloth of gold....."

The banks are 'versed' with primroses, partly scattered, partly in plots and squats, and at a little distance shewing milkwhite or silver—little spilt till-fulls of silver. I have seen them reflected in green standing farmyard water... ..

.....the bluebells in the little wood between the College and the highroad and in one of the Hurst Green cloughs. In the little wood/opposite the light/they stood in blackish spreads or sheddings like the spots on a snake. The heads are then like thongs and solemn in grain and grape-colour. But in the clough/through the light/they came in falls of sky-colour washing the brows and slacks of the ground with vein-blue, thickening at the double, vertical themselves and the young grass and brake fern combed vertical, but the brake struck the upright of all this with light winged transomes."*

It is not suprising that the assortment of hues on the peacock's wing should have attracted Hopkins's minute observation : "It has a very regular warp, like a shell, in which the bird embays himself, the bulge being inwards below but the hollow inwards above, cooping him in and only opening towards the brim, where the feathers are beginning to rive apart. The eyes, which lie alternately when the train is shut, like scales or gadroons, fall into irregular rows when it is opened, and then it thins and darkens against the light, it loses the moistness and satin it has when in the pack but takes another/grave and expressive splendour."†

Apart from the colours of flowers, the subtle and delicate tints of leaves often supply the themes of reflection in Hopkins's *Journal* :

**N. B. and P.*, p. 145.

†*Ibid.*, p. 146.

"White poplar leaves at this season silver behind, olive black in front. Birch leaves on a fading tree give three colours—green, white and yellow.....

Elmleaves very crisp and chalky and yellow, a scarlet brightness against the blue. Sparks of falling leaves streaming down."...

Mist alters visual impression and snow reflects bright sunlight like frost. These phenomena readily attract Hopkins :

"This morning, September 27 (1873), blue mist breathing with wind across the garden after mass. Noticed how everything looked less and nearer, not bigger and spacious in the fog. Tops of the trees hidden almost or where seen grey, till the sun threw a moist red light through them. Two beautiful sights : printed upon the sun, a glowing silver piece, came out the sharp visible leafage of invisible trees ; on either side nothing whatever could be seen of them, and these leaves handful for handful, changed as I walked ; the other was splays of shadow-spokes struck out from any knot of leaves or boughs where the sun was/like timbers across the thick air."*

"Snow fallen upon the leaves had in the night coined or morselled itself into pyramids like hail. Blade leaves of some bulbous plant, perhaps a small iris, were like delicate little saws, so hagged with frost. It is clear that things are spiked with the frost mainly on one side, but why this is and how far different things on the same side at the same time I have not yet found."†

"At the end of the month hard frosts. Wonderful downpour of leaf : when the morning sun began to melt the frost they fell at one touch and in a few minutes a whole tree was flung of them ; they lay masking and papering the ground at the foot. Then the tree seems to be looking down on its cast self as blue sky on snow after a long fall, its losing, its doing."‡

Images of sound acquire importance in Hopkins's later poetry where the rhythm is associated with instress, and where it leads him to make light of rhyme and other poetic conventions. But his appreciation of sound-values is keen and forms part of his early sensuousness. It is clearly traceable in his *Journal*. In narrating his trip to Aosta, Hopkins writes : "Day fine...First fine ; then on the road a thunderstorm with hard rain, the thunder musical and like gongs and rolling in great floors of sound."§

**N. B. and P.*, p. 185.

†*Ibid.*, p. 186.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 159.

§*Ibid.*, p. 112.

Again, "After much rain, some thunder, and no summer as yet..... there was this day a thunderstorm on a greater scale—huge rocky clouds lit with livid light, hail and rain that flooded the garden, and thunder ringing and echoing round like brass."*

Colour-effects in Hopkins's prose have already been referred to. Hopkins appreciates them wherever they are noticed. Subtle distinctions only heighten his interest. Here, for example, is his analysis of the colour of lightning:— "The lightning seemed to me white like a flash from looking-glass but, Mr. Lentaigne in the afternoon noticed it rose-coloured and lilac. I noticed two kinds of flash, but I am not sure that sometimes there were not the two together from different points of the same cloud or starting from the same point different ways—one a straight stroke, broad like a stroke with chalk and liquid, as if the blade of an oar just stripped open a ribbon scar in smooth water and it caught the light; the other narrow and wire-like, like the splitting of a rock and danced down-along in a thousand jags ... there was a perceptible interval between the blaze and first inset of the flash and its score in the sky and that that seemed to be first of all laid in a bright confusion and then uttered by a tongue of brightness."†

Hopkins's Diaries and *Journal* undoubtedly reflect his mental habits and artistic taste in the earlier stage of their development. They are unique in one sense and link Hopkins with some of his predecessors. It has been remarked that Hopkins was not a Victorian and that "In tone and temper this work (*i.e.*, Hopkins's *Wreck of the Deutschland*) was at a last remove from the characteristic verse and prose of the period. The irresponsible wit of Wilde, the 'evil' line of Beardsley, Dowson's pretty frailty, Davidson's dogged revolt, the aesthetics of Symons, and the preciously distilled mystery of the early Yeats—all these have their place, but their spirit has nothing to do with the spirit of Hopkins. From a definitely Roman Catholic point of view there was a wider appeal in the domestic passion of Patmore the delicate if bloodless, orthodoxy of Alice Meynell, and the flamboyant ritual of Francis Thompson. In these surroundings Hopkins would have been regarded merely as an oddity."‡ But the early poetry of Hopkins discloses his affiliation to the schools of Keats and pre-Raphaelites like D. G. Rossetti.

This affiliation has reference to manner, if not to matter to the same extent. The Victorian age was shaped by the forces of

**N. B. and P.*, p. 149

†*Ibid.*, pp., 149-50.

‡Abbott's Introduction to *The Letters of General Manely Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, p. xix.

democracy and science. Victorian society and institutions were considerably influenced by the spirit of rationalism and of equality. But there was a reaction against rationalism and modernism, which sometimes manifested itself in a hearkening back to the Middle Ages. It was evident before the Oxford Movement began and even before the afterglow of the Romantic Revival had disappeared. The charm of the variegated life of the medieval epoch and its colourful atmosphere—of spectacular institutions like chivalry and church rituals—was felt even by Keats. Rossetti and Morris were also attracted by certain aspects of the medieval epoch. Even Tennyson, the representative Victorian author and poet-laureate, was a lover of the Arthurian legend.

Medieval life and society had their influence on literary technique, for they readily lent themselves to pictorial representation in literature. Actually the work of Morris, Rossetti and Tennyson and even of Keats (not to speak of Chaucer and Spenser), was quite graphic and abounded in clear visual images because of its medieval subject-matter. Sometimes the characteristics of pageantry and of phantasmagoric processions have been traceable in it. This pictorial manner is clear in Hopkins's early poetry, and in this respect Hopkins was a Victorian poet, though this phase did not last long.

Actually Hopkins wrote *A Voice from the World* (1864-65) with reference to Christina Rossetti's *Convent Threshold*. It was entitled 'Fragments of An Answer to Miss Rossetti's *Convent Threshold*'. About this he had written to Baillie in July-August, 1864: 'I have nearly finished an answer to Miss Rossetti's *Convent Threshold* to be called *A Voice from the World*, or something like that, with which I am at present in the fatal condition of satisfaction.' Hopkins's poem can be linked with Christina Rossetti's through its diction, irrespective of the fact that the latter was actually the source of its inspiration. The graphic, clear outlines and the details of natural description would put both in the pre-Raphaelite category. There is an apparent resemblance between

I choose the stairs that mount above,
Stair after golden skyward stair,
To city and to sea of glass.
My lily feet are soiled with mud,
With scarlet mud which tells a tale
Of hope that was.....

and

I walk towards eve our walks again :
When lily-yellow is the west,
Say, o'er it hangs a water-cloud
And ravell'd into strings of rain.

Hopkins's luscious poetry in

Once it was scarce perceivèd Lent
For orience of the daffodil ;
Once, jostling thick, the bluebell sheaves
The peacock'd copse were known to fill ;
Through other bars it used the thrill,
And carried me with ravishment,
Your signal, when apart we stood,
Thorn-engaged, impaled and pent
With just such sweet potential skill,
Late in the green weeks of April
Cuckoo calls Cuckoo up the wood.....

must remind the reader of similar sensuousness in

Milk-white wine-flushed among the vines,
Up and down leaping, to and fro,
Most glad, most full, made strong with wines,
Blooming as peaches pearled with dew,
Their golden windy hair afloat,
Love-music warbling in their throat,
Young men and women come and go.

Hopkins wrote also *The Nightingale* partly in imitation of Christina Rossetti in January, 1866. This poem obviously reminds one of Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* on account of its colour-effects, though the bird here sings in the early dawn :

From nine o'clock till morning light
The copse was never more than grey
The darkness did not close that night
But day passed into day.
And soon I saw it shewing new
Beyond the hurst with such a hue
As silken garden-poppies do.
A crimson East, that bids for rain.

Keats's "full-throated ease" might have suggested Hopkins's lines

.....He might have strung
A row of ripples in the brook,
So forcibly he sung,
The mist upon the leaves have strewed,

And danced the balls of dew that stood
In acres all above the wood.

I thought the air must cut and strain
The windpipe when he sucked his breath.....

The Fragment of *Richard* written in 1865 consists of about thirty lines, but discloses within this short compass the well-known features of pre-Raphaelite poetry. Details of shape, colour and size are crowded into the piece and these make the representation of the landscape distinctly pictorial in point of technique :

—the banks were steep ; a brush of trees
Rounded it, thinning skywards by degrees,
With parallel shafts,—as upward-parted ashes,—
Their highest sprays were drawn as fine as lashes,
With centres duly touch'd and nestlike spots,
And oaks,— but these were leaved in sharper knots.

.....The grass was red
And long, the trees were coloured'd, but the o'er-head
Milky and dark, with an attuning stress
Controll'd them to a gray-green temperateness,
Making the shadow sweeter.

Pictorial poetry with minute details is noticeable in *The Escorial*. Hopkins allowed his imagination to run riot in this poem. The interior of the Escorial is full of the richest productions of art like pictures, tapestry, statues, etc. The sensuous images (of colour and form) in Keats's description of the bed-chamber of Madeline and of the chapel in *The Eve of St. Agnes* can be paralleled by the following which might, in fact, have been suggested by them:

No finish'd proof was this of Gothic grace
With flowing tracery engemming rays
Of colour in high casements face to face ;
And foliag'd crownals (pointing how the ways
Of art best follow nature) in a maze
Of finish'd diapers, that fills the eye
And scarcely traces where one beauty strays
And melts amidst another ; ciel'd on high
With blazon'd groins, and crowned with hues of majesty.

(*The Escorial, Rom*)

Mass and volume revealed in architecture which can also be suggested in pictorial poetry and which Keats has described so magnificently in *Endymion* (in the passages on the under world), impart remarkable dignity to *The Escorial*. This is how Hopkins paints the

classic temple order'd round
 With massy pillars of the Doric mood
 Broad-fluted, nor with shafts acanthus-crown'd,
 Pourtray'd along the frieze with Titan's brood
 That battled Gods for heaven St. 7).
 The rang'd long corridors and cornic'd halls,

 And damasqu'd arms and foliag'd carving piled —
 With painting gleamed the rich pilaster'd walls (St. 10)

Pictorial poetry in the restricted sense of poetry representing real pictures or portraits such as Legouis discovered in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sir Sidney Colvin in Keats's *Sleep and Poetry*, is also noticeable in *The Escorial*. One may point to the following :

There play'd the virgin mother with her Child
 In some broad palmy mead, and saintly smiled,
 And held a cross of flowers in purple bloom ;
 He, where the crownals droop'd, himself reviled
 And bleeding saw. — There hung from room to room
 The skill of dreamy Claude, and Titian's mellow gloom.
 There in some darken'd landscape Paris fair
 Stretches the envied fruit with fatal smile
 To golden-girdled Cypris ; — Cerest here
 Raves through Sicilian pastures many a mile ;
 But, hapless youth, Antinous the while
 Gazes aslant his shoulder, viewing nigh
 Where Phoebus weeps for him whom Zephyr's guile
 Chang'd to a flower ; and there, with placid eye
 Apollo views the smitten Python writhe and die.

(St. 10-11)

The references to Claude and Titian and to the dark colouring of their landscapes are clear evidence of Hopkins's interest in painting. "Darken'd landscape" in one of the above lines has also been taken to suggest the colouring in the work of Rubens. Allusion to Raphael's "Lo spasima" which was believed to have been in the Escorial, is more veiled, but the line

"He, where the crownals droop'd, himself reviled
 And bleeding saw."

is picturesque enough to indicate the nature of the poet's art. The references to the beautiful statue of the youth Antinous, to Hyacinthus and to the statue of Apollo Belvedere (in 'Apollo views the smitten Python writhe and die') serve the same purpose.

A Vision of the Mermaids, another early poem written in 1862,

equally brings out the pictorial nature of Hopkins's composition in the first period of his authorship. Some believe it to have been a prize-poem, but there is difference of opinion on the point. The mermaids as they rise from the sea to gaze at the sun and the sky, reveal their beauty which consists mainly in splash of colour. Hopkins paints in detail their fins, locks etc. and the reflection of light from them :—

This was their manner : one translucent crest
Of tremulous film, more subtle than the vest
Of dewy gorse blurr'd with the gossamer fine,
From crown to tail-fin floating, fringed the spine,
Droop'd o'er the brows like Hector's casque, and sway'd
In silken undulation, spurr'd and ray'd
With spiked quills all of intensest hue ;
And was as tho' some sapphire molten-blue
Were vein'd and streak'd with dusk-deep lazuli,
Or tender pinks with bloody Tyrian dye.
From their white waists a silver skirt was spread
To mantle o'er the tail, such as is shed
Around the Water-Nymphs in fretted falls,
At red Pompeii on medallion'd walls.
A tinted fin on either shoulder hung :
Their pansy-dark or bronzen locks were strung
With coral, shells, thick-pearled cords.....

Various hues and their finer tints—white, roseate, crimson-white and purple—suffusing natural objects, the sea and the sky contribute to the charm of many of the passages. The following may serve as illustrations :—

—looking on the waters, I was ware
Of something drifting through delighted air,
—An isle of roses, — and another near ;—
And more, on each hand, thicken and appear
In shoals of bloom ; as in unpeopled skies,
Save by two stars, more crowding lights arise,
And planets bud where'er we turn our mazèd eyes.

*

*

*

—the west had grown
To an orb'd rose, which, by hot pantings blown
Apart, betwixt ten thousand petall'd lips
By interchange gasp'd splendour and eclipse.

The zenith melted to a rose of air ;
The waves were rosy-lipp'd.....

*

*

*

Plum-purple was the west ; but spikes of light
Spear'd open lustrous gashes, crimson-white ;
(Where the eye fix'd, fled the encrimsoning spot,
And, gathering, floated where the gaze was not ;)
And through their parting lids there came and went
Keen glimpses of the inner firmament :

Winter with the Gulf Stream is an early poem of Hopkins remarkable for an assortment of colours—white, blue, violet, yellow, etc. The monotony of the white of snow is relieved by other hues. Images of sound are blended with images of colour to heighten the melody :—

Frost-furred our ivies are and rough
With bills of rime the brambles shew.
The hoarse leaves crawl on hissing ground
Because the sighing wind is low.

*

*

*

A simple passage of weak notes
Is all the winter bird dare try
The bugle moon by day light floats
So glassy white about the sky,
So like a berg of hyaline,
And pencilled blue so daintily,
I never saw her so divine.
But through black branches, rarely drest
In scarves of silky shot and shine.

Thus love of sensuousness noticed in Pre-Raphaelitism was the mark of the early poetry of Hopkins which had its origin in his school days when he delighted in painting and music, and shrank from ugliness. His Oxford days which began in 1863 (his twentieth year) brought about a change in his temper, and, in consequence, in his literary career. Some exception has been taken to the view that "the Oxford of that day turned Hopkins from a rebellious boy-poet into a Jesuit priest." But he became a Catholic in 1866 and entered into the Jesuit novitiate two years later ; it was followed by the destruction of some of his verses and his renunciation of poetic activity. This continued (with the exception of a few presentation pieces) till December, 1875 when he took up his pen again and wrote *The Wreck of the Deutschland*.

This poem is a thing apart, and has little resemblance with his early work. "The writing of it made his style, and his confidence in himself as poet, secure." But it is excited, violent, and over-pitched and reveals the new rhythm that had long been haunting his ear. The poems that follow it—written during the short period of 1877-80 (approximately)—are however of a different character and remind one of Hopkins's early poetical work which can be traced to his graphic prose in the *Diaries* and the *Journal*. In these poems his youthful sensibilities partly re-appear.

Hopkins loved the stars and has elaborately described them in manifold ways in one of his early diaries, bringing out their fancied similarity with a variety of objects. Here are his notes :

The sky minted into golden sequins.

Stars like gold tufts.

Stars like golden bees.

Stars like golden rowels.

Sky peak'd with tiny flames.

Stars like tiny-spoked wheels of fire.

Lantern of night pierced in eyelets.*

He tells us how he awoke once at two in the morning and saw the heavens with the "stars twirling brilliantly. Taurus up, a pale light stressily edging the eastern skyline, and lightning mingled with the dawn."† Again, he noticed large clusters of shooting stars and marked their positions in poetic language: "Great fall of stars..... they radiated from Perseus or Andromeda and in falling took a pitch to the left, half-way through their flight." In the beautiful poem *The Starlight Night* he sings equally rapturously of stars which he knew and loved so well :

"Look at the stars : look, look up at the skies !

O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air !

The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there !

Down in dim woods the diamond delves ! the elves'-
eyes !

Hopkins was attracted by clouds as much as by stars, as indicated already. The *Journal* records how he noticed "a remarkable fan of clouds traced in fine horizontals, which afterwards lost their level, some becoming oblique. Below appearing bright patches which crowded up one after another." He again notes how "white rose clouds formed the ground of the sky near the sundown, taking

*N. B. and P., p. 32.

†Ibid., p. 110.

straight ranks and gilded by the light ; in front heavy dark masses with their edges soaked red and fragments of bright thread." Similar descriptions of cloud-formations are numerous, *e.g.*, "Very clear afternoon ; a long chain of waxen delicately moulded clouds just tinged with yellow in march behind Pendle. At sun-set it seemed to gather most of it to one great bale." In *Penmaen Pool* he writes of clouds reflected in water :

And Charles's Wain, the wondrous seven,
And sheep-flock clouds like worlds of wool,
For all they shine so, high in heaven,
Shew brighter shaken in Penmaen Pool.

*

*

*

But what's to see in stormy weather,
When grey showers gather and gusts are cool?—
Why, raindrop-roundels looped together
That lace the face of Penmaen Pool.

In *Hurrahing in Harvest* Hopkins's heart is lifted up by the beauty of the cloudland to the thought of the glory of the creator :

—up above, what wind-walks ! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds ! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies ?
I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour.

The Loss of the Eurydice portrays the quiet March day which broke out suddenly into a storm with clouds overcasting the sky. Hopkins's pictorial outlook has, it will be seen, been modified here by later experiences and studies :

— what black Boreas wrecked her ? he
Came equipped, deadly-electric,
A beetling baldbright cloud through England
Riding : there did storms not mingle ? and
Hailropes hustle and grind their
Heavengravel ? Wolfsnow, worlds of it, wind there ?

Hopkins found delight also in birds and bird-songs.* He had marked the cuckoo's song from boyhood. In his *Journal* Hopkins notes the effects of the bird's notes as they rise clear and rich from the hollow of the rising ground.

In *The Sea and the Skylark* Hopkins thus portrays the lark soaring up into the sky :

*See *A Voice from the World*.

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
 Trench-right, the tide that ramps against the shore ;
 With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
 Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.
 Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
 His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
 In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
 And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.

The sea engages his attention prominently. The Channel which he crossed in a trip from the French coast is thus described : "Sea calm, with little walking wavelets edged with fine eyebrow crispings, and later nothing but a netting or chain-work on the surface ; and even that went, so that the smoothness was marbly and perfect."*

Again, "In the channel I saw (as everywhere in surfy water) how the laps of foam mouthed upon one another. In watching the sea one should be alive to the oneness which all its motion and tumult receives from its perpetual balance and falling this way and that to its level."†

The calm of the sea is artistically suggested in *The Loss of the Eurydice* :

O blue March bay.

Bright sun lanced fire in the heavenly bay.....

In *The Sea and the Skylark*, there is reference to

"the tide that ramps against the shore ;

With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar....."

The different diction of *The Wreck* fits in with the opposite aspect of the sea with its water churned into massive waves, angry and frightful.

Though the influence of Hopkins's studies in the philosophy of Loyola and of Duns Scotus, of his conversion and of his exquisitely tempered and religious mind is revealed in the poems of 1877-80, their sensuous nature is clear. Here the poet's "senses, not his religion, are in the ascendant." They are poems written, indeed, to the glory of God but by a poet "who is looking on the world as charged with His grandeur and revealing His bounty and presence." Loveliness of the world is only a testimony to His affection. "The fusion of earthly beauty and exemplum," says Abbott, "is often so incomplete that the second is merely the addendum of a poet captive in the first place to the beauty besieging his senses. This loveliness is

*N. B. and P., p. 114.

†N. B. and P., pp. 167.

here for its own sake."* Though Hopkins's characteristic style has crystallised in it, *Pied Beauty* has remarkable pictorial qualities : contrast of colours is prominently brought out in lines like "skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow" and

—rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim ;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings ;

Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow and plough...

The Windhover has been rightly called "a magnificent tribute to a natural thing perfectly done." Dedicated to Christ as it is, the symbolic image of the Falcon flying upwards, and reflecting the morning light has exquisite pictorial charm :

—morning's minion, king-

dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon,
in his riding

Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and
striding

High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing

In his ecstasy ! then off, off forth on swing,

As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend : the
hurl and gliding

Rebuffed the big wind.

Hopkins's sketches do not have flowing outlines. Nor do they produce impressions in which parts are consistently connected so as to suggest the whole at the background. On the contrary, they are given undue prominence. This is due as much to word-stress necessitated by his system of versification as to the visual importance given by him to certain special marks or features of objects. It may probably be said that very often the wood is lost in the trees as in

Look at the stars ! look, look up at the skies !

O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air !

The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there !

Down in dim woods the diamond delves ! the elves'-eyes !

The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies !

Wind-beat whitebeam ! airy abeles set on a flare !

Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare !

and

Nothing is so beautiful as spring—

When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush ;

*Abbott's Introduction to *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, p. XXVIII.

Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
 Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
 The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing ;
 The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
 The descending blue ; that blue is all in a rush
 With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.*

This emphasis on details, though supported by rhythm, is really inspired by the spirit of pre-Raphaelite poetry which has left its mark on Hopkins's early work. The only difference is that sensuous beauty is now concentrated in Hopkins's poetry—it is no longer diffuse as it was in his earlier work. More of it is derived from the imagery of sound than from visual imagery. And so far as the latter is concerned, delicate tints and softer hues are wanting in the later poetry. It seems as if sheer sensuous beauty has made room for something more substantial and more weighty. "The world" according to Hopkins, "is charged with the grandeur of God." And grandeur implies magnitude and immense force. It may rightly be looked upon as a form of beauty ; but since it is an attribute of God himself, it includes everything consistent with His greatness and His transcendence. Hopkins says :

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil ;
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod ?
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod ;
 And all is seared with trade ; bleared, smeared with toil ;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell : the
 soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
 And for all this, nature is never spent ;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things ;
 And though the last lights off the black west went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah ! bright
 wings.†

The May Magnificat is the praise of Mary, and she is mentioned in the very first line of the poem. But even her exultation in God is induced by nature in all her glory—her beauty in the month of May which is so graphically painted :

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple
 Bloom lights the orchard-apple

*Spring
 †God's Grandeur.

And thicket and thorp are merry
With silver-surfèd cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like lakes
And magic cuckoocall
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering earth
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
To remember and exultation
In God who was her salvation.

(The idea that Nature only reflects the glory of God and that it is to be studied only for the realization of divine bounty or divine essence, was generally inspired in Hopkins by the teachings of Loyola. Hopkins was a close student of his *Spiritual Exercises* and wrote a commentary on it. The opening paragraph of the "Principle and Foundation" as given by St. Ignatius Loyola runs thus:

("Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul; and the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the prosecution of the end for which he was created.")

Hopkins follows this view when he writes, "All things are charged with love, are *charged with God*, and if we know how to touch them, give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him." Again, "That is Christ playing at me and me playing at Christ, only that it is no play but truth; That is Christ being me, and me being Christ.*" Hopkins forsook the world, but turned to the earth which represents God's plenitude in creation, under the influence of *The Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola. He accepted fully the Christian view that God is the creator of the world and is Himself the first in the order of created beings. This is different from the Platonic as well as the Aristotelian conception. Plato's God is good "defined by a perfection in the order of quality." Aristotle's God is thought as defined by a "perfection in one of the orders of being". (The Christian God besides being self-created is also the creator of the world. Hopkins observes, ".....the world, with the flour, the grain, the wheatear, the seeds, the ground, the

† *N. B. and P.*, p. 342.

**Ibid.*, p. 332.

sun, the rain...was made from nothing...Man cannot create a single speck, God creates all that is besides Himself."* This is why in all ages the mind of man has turned to creation and looked upon it as a wonder—why Nature has been regarded as reflecting the glory of God. And Christ Himself uses the beautiful objects of nature to illustrate his teachings. He says, for example, in *St. Matthew*:

"Consider well the lilies of the field ; how do they grow ? They do not labour, nor do they spin ; and I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."

True to his inner conviction, Hopkins spent long hours in meditating on the mystery of creation and God's manifold manifestation in the universe. His sketches and drawings of trees, waves, snow-fall etc. were inspired by the same conviction, and it was this that found poetic expression in the lines

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil ;

It gathers to a greatness.....(*God's Grandeur*)

Beauty of the human form attracts Hopkins as much as nature's beauty. He is eager to study the details of both. The outline of the human figure—'a lovely manly mould'—impresses him equally with man's features just as tints of flowers and lineaments of trees and forests inspire his artistic sense. The drowned sailor in *The Loss of the Eurydice* is an illustration of the poet's appreciation of the physical beauty of man. In *Harry Ploughman* there is further illustration of this:

Hard as hurdle arms, with a broth of goldish flue
Breathed round ; the rack of ribs ; the scooped flank ; lank
Rope-over thigh ; knee-nave ; and barrelled shank—

Head and foot, shoulder and shank—

By a gray eye's heed steered well, one crew, fall to ;
Stand at stress.....

He leans to it, Harry bends, look. Back, elbow, and
liquid waist

In him, all quail to the wallowing o' the plough:

's cheek crimsons ; curls

Wag or crossbridle, in a wind lifted, windlaced—

See his wind-lilylocks-laced

In *Felix Randal* Hopkins watches the farrier's

mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome

Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it"

*N. B. and P., p. 301.

His admiration for the active worker's sinew and brain is unstinted. Hopkins's love of the human figure and his interest in physiognomy are evidenced in his *Journal*, too. His study of details here is as accurate as his observation of the physical features of the landscape. He describes the subject-matter of a portrait in the following passage: "The young man mowing was a great stroke, a figure quite made up of dew and grace and strong fire: the sweep of the scythe and swing and sway of the whole body even to the rising of the one foot on tiptoe while the other was flung forward was as if such a thing had never been painted before, so fresh and so very strong. In contrast the young girl with the old woman on her arm with an enforced languor in her ;.....very pensive, and delicate and sweet; auburn hair; beautiful, rather full, hands, crossed, a pretty clever halo of a cap."

His study of a repulsive type of French face is noticeable in this context for its emphasis on details: "It is hard to seize what it is. The outline is oval, but cut away at the jaws; the eyes are big, shallow-set, close to the eye-brows, and near, the upper lid straight and long, the lower brought down to a marked corner in the middle, the pupils large and clear; the nostrils prominent; the lips fleshy, long, and unwaved, with a vertical curling at the end the nose curved hollow or so tending; the head large; the skin fair—white and scarlet colour." Even more deeply is he moved by the loveliness of youth and young manhood 'breathing bloom of a chastity in man-sex fine', a bloom doomed to mutability and threatened by spiritual disaster, yet capable of attaining to the 'handsome heart' and 'hallowing grace.' This is illustrated in *Epithalamion* which was left unfinished, possibly because it was found difficult to reconcile its spirit with the idea of ascetic renunciation. Abbott points out the resemblance between Whitman and Hopkins in this respect (Introduction to *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, p. XXX).

Music attracted Hopkins early in his life along with painting. But none of these interfered with his poetical activities. Later in life when he was a Professor at Dublin, the study and writing of music took up much of his time, and Bridges actually discouraged him from pursuing his taste for music obviously because he had high hopes of his friend's future as poet and grudged the time that was lost to poetry. But Hopkins was serious in his musical studies and it is impossible to deny that they helped his verse, although its musical qualities had latterly been determined by his characteristic

After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.

Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve

Strokes of havoc, unselve

The sweet especial scene,

Rural scene, a rural scene,

Sweet especial rural scene.

(*Binsey Poplars*)

Again,

How to keep—is there any any, is there none such, nowhere
known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace,
latch or catch or key to keep

Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty.....
from vanishing away?

O is there no frowning of these wrinkles, ranked wrinkles deep,
Down? no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still
messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?

The poems of Hopkins's middle mature period (1880-83) differ from those in which he portrays nature's beauty as revealing the grandeur or greatness of God. They are "the poetry of man's spirit in travail" and of human suffering. Hopkins had latterly been taking more seriously to his duties as priest, and there was a great change in his spirit and outlook. He came to think that poetry was not compatible with spirituality. Dixon noticed this and begged him not to give up the pursuit of poetry, as Bridges had once done. But Hopkins clung to the view that "Poetry must not be allowed to come between himself and God." With greater devotion to the spiritual ideal, Hopkins felt more and more the insufficiency of his own realisation which could not bring any satisfaction to him. The result was a feeling of despair, agony and frustration, with consequential indifference to worldly things, gain and fame.

This had as its background the influence of Hopkins's studies in Philosophy. He drifted away from the sensuousness of his early years and tried to realise the inner essence of things. The word *inscape* is used by him in the *Journal* to express his idea*. It means

*In his *Journal* of May 14, 1870 we have: "The chestnuts down by St. Joseph's were a beautiful sight: each spike had its own pitch, yet each followed in its place in the sweep with a deeper and deeper stoop. When the wind tossed them, they plunged and crossed one another without losing their *inscape*,"

the inner life or individuality of an object manifested in design etc. But *inscape* is not anything merely physical. There are two different elements in it—one outer and the other inner; and the poet often shifts his emphasis from the one to the other. *Inscape* is manifest in shape or contour along with colour, touch etc. Hopkins writes about *inscape* in different forms of natural life. The bird has it as much as the flower or the fruit. Of the peacock he writes, "..... the outermost eyes, detached and singled, give with their corner fringes the suggestion of that *inscape* of the flowing cusped trefoil which is often effective in art." The flag flower, according to Hopkins, affords a good study of a single *inscape* at different stages of growth: "A beautiful instance of *inscape* sided on the slide, that is successive sidings of one *inscape*, is seen in the behaviour of the flag flower from the shut bud to the full blowing"* The charming bluebells are thus mentioned in this context:

"The bluebells in your hand baffle you with their *inscape*, made to every sense: if you draw your fingers through them, they are lodged and struggle with a shock of wet heads; the long stalks rub and click and flatten to a fan on one another.....then there is the faint honey smell and in the mouth the sweet gum when you bite them. But this is easy, it is the eye they baffle. They give one a fancy of panpipes and of some wind instrument with stops—a trombone perhaps."

Instress is another word coined by Hopkins. It expresses his conception of the energy or force which produces the *inscape* or the individuality of an object. In a comment on *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, Hopkins, as pointed out by Peters, uses the word in this sense: ".....in man all that *energy* or *instress* with which the soul animates and otherwise acts in the body is by death thrown back upon the soul itself"† According to the poet, the nature of *instress* can be demonstrated by refraction through a glass: "Take a few primroses in a glass and the *instress* of brilliancy, sort of starriness—I have not the right word—so simple a flower gives is remarkable."‡ A second meaning of *instress* is impression or influence on the mind of man. Describing the charm of the scenery of Wales, Hopkins writes: "Looking all round but most in looking far up the valley, I felt an *instress* and charm of Wales." Again, as he

*N. B. and P., p. 143.

†Gerard Manley Hopkins by W. A. M. Peters, p. 13.

‡Ibid., p. 142.

watches a scene from a hill-top, he writes : "I looked into a lovely comb that gave me the *instress* of *Weeping Winifred*, which all the west country seems to me to have."*

The philosophic basis of the conception of *inscape* as of *instress* is supplied by Duns Scotus whose conservative attitude differed on theological and metaphysical questions from St. Thomas Aquinas's scholastic innovations. It was Scotus's analysis of form that led to Hopkins's idea of *inscape*. Scotus found two things in form—the universal nature and the *haecceitas* or *this-ness*. It is the latter that corresponds to *inscape*. Says Hopkins, "Scotus established the principle of individuation as a special form, an ultimate, incommunicable, indivisible, positive entity, which is added to the essence as the final difference determining it as an individual."

Poetry, according to Hopkins, should express the principle of individuation in a thing. It should also do justice to the *instress* *i.e.*, the energy which keeps this up. Rhythm and emphasis partly serve to bring out the *instress*, while on the choice of apt words depends the *inscape*—the form, design and other special characteristics of an object. The ordinary sensuous image of a thing failed, according to the later opinion of Hopkins, to represent it in its proper perspective and to suggest its essential nature—its *this-ness*. Hence he gave up medieval pre-Raphaelitism in word-painting. This has been called his withdrawal. Withdrawal from his earlier style to his later, more complex and more individual style really corresponds to the giving up of his old philosophical outlook followed by the acceptance of a new one suggested by the idea of *this-ness* of a thing and its underlying energy.

Inscape is the chief factor of Hopkins's later poetry and determines his poetic diction and imagery. In a letter to Coventry Patmore he says that the essential thing in a poet is *inscape*, "that is the individually distinctive beauty of style." He writes to Dixon that he thinks of *inscape* as the very soul of art. To Bridges he writes : ".....as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry."

Hopkins, accordingly, tries to discover the *inscape* of every object he deals with. He once *inscaped* the sun and the sunset together and said, "Before I had always taken the sunset and the sun as quite out of gauge with each other, as indeed physically they

are, for the eye after looking at the sun is blunted to everything else and if you look at the rest of the sunset, you must cover the sun, but today I inscaped them together and made the sun the true eye and ace of the whole, as it is.”*

The inscape of man, the blend of matter and spirit, engages Hopkins's attention in a number of poems. In *Felix Randal* where the rough figure of a sturdy farrier is glorified, Hopkins emphasizes the quality of hardihood in the man 'big-boned and hardy-handsome'. The head-note to *Henry Purcell* brings out the distinguishing feature of Purcell, which marks him off from other musicians: "whereas other musicians have given utterance to the moods of man's mind, he has, beyond that, uttered in notes the very make and *species* of man as created both in him and in all men generally".

What appeals to and strikes the poet is clearly suggested in the lines :

Not mood in him nor meaning, proud fire or sacred fear,
Or love or pity or all that sweet notes not his might nurse:
It is the forged feature finds me ; it is the rehearsal
Of own, of abrupt self there so thrusts on, so throngs the ear.

In *Harry Ploughman*, it is vigour or strength that, according to Hopkins, finds full expression in the man's exterior form. This is the justification for the coining of the words 'Amañsstrength' and 'sinew-service', as well as 'Rope-over thigh', 'barrelled shank' and 'barrowy brawn'. In *Tom's Garland* Divinity is beaming through the frame of a worker. His

'lordly head'

is 'With heaven's light high hung round.'

The Loss of the Eurydice brings out the inscape of the drowned youth :

... .. brown-as-dawning-skinned
With brine and shine and whirling wind.
O his nimble finger, his gnarled grip !
Leagues, leagues of seamanship
Slumber in these forsaken
Bones, this sinew, and will not waken.

The sublimest type of inscape is to be found in man's soul which can raise even the lowliest to the highest plane. *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire* gives fine poetic expression to this idea. The

*N. B. and P., p. 129.

eternal and immortal in man is in this poem most emphatically asserted and sought to be depicted, and it is this that is made the basis of his weight, importance and dignity.

O pity and indignation ! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, death blots black out.....

Yet

This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood,
immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

The Wreck of the Deutschland is one of the earliest specimens of Hopkins's condensed and most characteristic style. And here the images illustrate pointedly his conception of inscape. The swelling sea in which the ship is wrecked, the terrific wind, the curling foam and high waves give a full picture of the surroundings in the midst of which the tragedy happened. The poet tries to bring out through these the characteristically angry, cruel and merciless nature of the sea. And this is the inscape :

... .. so the sky keeps,
For the infinite air is *unkind*,
And the sea flint-flake, black-backed in the regular blow,
Sitting Eastnortheast, in cursed quarter, the wind ;
Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivellèd snow
Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps
... ..
One stirred from the rigging to save
The wild woman-kind below,
With a rope's end round the man. handy and brave—
He was pitched to his death at a blow,
For all his dreadnought breast and braids of thew :
They could tell him for hours, dandled the to and fro
Through the cobbled foam-fleece, what could he do
With the burl of the fountains of air, buck and the flood of the
wave?

... ..
Night roared, with the heart-break hearing a heart-broke rabble,
The woman's wailing, the crying of child without check.

The 'terrible' sonnets deal with the psychology of spiritual gloom. "Exile, isolation, and defeat are of their essence." Yet they do not deal with mere abstractions or with mental states. The imagery is in most cases concrete and is designed almost to visualize the suggestion of the inner psychic condition. This also illustrates Hopkins's idea of inscape.

The wild and dizzy pitch of torment in his soul is painted in the following lines :

O the mind, mind has mountains ; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here ! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind : all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Self-torment and a realization of the justice of this suffering form the theme of the following :

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste : my taste was me ;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours.

This may not be regarded as pictorial poetry by some. It is no doubt different from the early composition of Hopkins in which the picturesque, in the ordinary sense of the term, is so apparent. The pictorial element in the later poetry is different. The figure is not always fully drawn along with its surroundings and it is not quite steady. We have intermittent glimpses of different aspects or of various facets, and these have often a prominence and a glare which are almost symbolic. It is like fitful bursts of lightning disclosing momentarily objects enveloped in darkness. Pictorial poetry in Hopkins's later work has assumed quite a different character which is the outcome of the poet's philosophical creed and religious belief and specially of his theories of inscape and instress. For comparison and contrast reference may be made to the poetry of the Imagists and the Symbolists.



LECTURE VIII

Impressionists, Imagists and Symbolists

WHAT happened in the domain of English literature in the middle of the nineteenth century repeated itself towards the end. Painting influenced poetry in the days of the Rossettis and Morris, and again it moulded the technique of verse in the work of Symonds, Henley, Yeats, Davidson, the Sitwells, Eliot and others.

Impressionism had its origin in French painting. It was a revolt against the placid, self-righteous attitude of the French official salon. The word was derived from "Impressions", the title of a painting by Claude Monet, depicting Sunset. It was subjected to criticism on account of its departure from the French conventional technique. But the new technique was appreciated by revolutionary artists, and had a number of followers of whom Manet, Pissarro, Renoir, Degas and Gauguin may be mentioned. The difference between English Pre-Raphaelite painters and French Impressionists was that the former were organised into a school with an organ for the ventilation of their views, while the latter were individuals working independently.

Impressionism in painting has as its chief characteristic the substitution of transitory appearance in place of permanent reality, as it is generally believed to be. It depicts things as they appear at any given moment and not as they actually are, according to our knowledge of their permanent form and colour.

There are differences between the two. Green foliage, for example, appears blue at a distance, and shadows are not neutral grey or brown, but partake of, and are modified by, the colours of the surroundings. It may therefore be said that Impressionist painters are more realistic in one sense, though they are guided by appearances—certainly they faithfully follow their own personal experiences, and avoid illusions and preconceived ideas and notions. It has truly been remarked that Impressionism is a kind of inverted Pre-Raphaelitism, the latter emphasising details which are not visible actually from a distance.

The transition from Pre-Raphaelitism to Impressionism means historically, though not logically, the change from the medieval to

contemporary times, from the romantic to the mechanical age, from pageantry and phantasmagoria to utilitarian occupation, from the colourful to the drab, from the glint of armour to the smoke and din of the factory. It is not that Impressionism can have no application to the spectacular aspects of chivalry or royalty. But it flourished in a mechanical age, and stark reality formed its background. Hence realism and Impressionism are almost always found in alliance.

The effect of impressionistic art on poetry was not due to the fact that the painter and the poet were combined in the same person such as had happened in the case of D. G. Rossetti and Morris. The underlying cause was an identity of conception of the subject-matter of art, though expressed through different media. In impressionistic poetry one would not generally look for clear outlines, symmetry and freshness of colouring, though there were exceptions. Instead, there are often faded hues, blurred shapes and indistinct form. Strictly speaking, the epithet 'pictorial' cannot be attributed to poetical work with these attributes; but if a picture is a representation of an object on the canvas and if a pictorial poem is meant to be only a faithful description of it, whatever the nature or look of the object may be, the word 'pictorial' is not quite inappropriate in this context.

Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson are called Decadent poets. The former had not so perfect a talent as the latter. But he reveals the influence of impressionistic painting. *Days and Nights*, dedicated to Pater and owing much to Rossetti, bears clear naturalistic impressions. In the colour-studies in *Grey and Green* and *London Nights* there is the reflection of impressionistic art. Henley's impressionistic pieces are remarkably attractive and the 'influence of Impressionist painters is clear in *London Voluntaries*. 'His best work is pictorial, capturing the fugitive tricks of air which transform sordidness into beauty.' The effects of light and shade are keenly appreciated by him, and the unity of each of the poems in *London Voluntaries* depends on this. Impressionism is one of the features of the poetry of Davidson, as is illustrated in the following lines :

Brian. Trearfully sinks the pallid sun.

Menzies. Bring in the lamps: Autumn is done.

Percy. Nay, twilight silvers the flashing drops;
 And a whiter fall is behind.

Brian. And the wild east mouths the chimney-tops,
 The Pandean pipes of the wind.

Menzies. The dripping ivy drapes the walls;
 The drenched red creepers flare;
 And the draggled chestnut plumage falls
 In every park and square.

Percy. Nay, golden garlands strew the way
 For the old triumph of decay

Basil. And I know, in a living land of spells—
 In an excellent land of rest,
 Where a crimson fount of sunset wells
 Out of the darkling west—
 That the poplar, the willow, the scented lime,
 Full-leaved in the shining air,
 Tarry as if the enchanter time
 Had fixed them deathless there. (*All Hallows' Eve*)

Things seen from a distance appear indistinct and their colours seem subdued. The verse of Edith Sitwell, also influenced by Impressionism, brings out this dullness and its joylessness:

Outside, the dust of all the dead
 Thick on the ground is spread
 Covering the tinsel flowers
 And pretty dove-quick hours,
 Among the round leaves, Cupid-small
 Upon the trees so wise and tall.
 O dust of all the dead, my heart has known
 That terrible Gehenna of the lone
 Deserted by the flesh, with Death alone!

(*The Hambone and the Heart*)

But Edith Sitwell's world is often full of bright-coloured objects, though they are not well marked out always; everything is however concrete, and abstractions are banished from it. It is a world of things, not of thoughts; yet at the same time it is a world of sensations, rather than of appearances. "Objects and scenes are often robbed of their visual quality, in order that they may be given a sensation quality. The reader is expected to receive an impression of objects not through descriptions that enable him to recognize them as things known by sight, but by an application of epithets designed to revive the sensations previously experienced in contact with similar objects, or in similar circumstances."*

*A. C. Ward, *Twentieth-century Literature*, p. 192.

Where the visual quality is toned down or eliminated, the poem ceases to have much pictorial significance. The impression that it still produces is something inferior, and unsatisfactory. "Of beauty there is little; it is elbowed out by a succession of vivid fashion-plate pictures alternating with kaleidoscope designs".*

Osbert Sitwell is another Impressionist. The sensations of heat, and then of coolness and silence, different from, and in addition to, visual perception, are suggested in the following lines:—

Petunias in mass formation,
An angry rose, a hard carnation,
Hot yellow grass, a yellow palm
Rising, giraffe-like, into calm,
All these glare hotly in the sun.
Behind are woods where shadows run
Like water through the dripping shade
That leaves and laughing winds have made.
Here silence like a silver bird
Pecks at the droning heat. (Giardino Pubbico)

Yeats says that he was affected by Eliot's *Waste Land* as by a painting by Manet. "I longed for the vivid colour and light of Rousseau and Courbet, I could not endure the grey middle-tint, and even to-day Manet gives me an incomplete pleasure." The same thing may be said of Eliot's *Preludes* which conveys the impression of faded colours more effectively. This passage furnishes an example:

The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots:
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

Similar are the following lines from *Little Gidding*:

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.

**Twentieth-century Literature*, p. 193.

Dust inbreathed was a house—
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
The death of hope and despair,
This is the death of air.

Though T.S. Eliot tried to give symbolic expression to the sense of frustration and weariness in the post-war world caused by suffering and devastation and though spiritual blight was his message, the corresponding visual aspect of his poetry cannot be overlooked.

Imagism is akin to Impressionism, and the Imagists tried, in one sense, to carry on the work of the Impressionists in poetry. Imagism was anti-romantic and grew out of a Poets' Club founded in jest by Hulme in 1908 for revolutionizing English poetry. He said, "I object even to the best of the romantics.....I object to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other.....The thing has got so bad now that a poem which is dry and hard, or properly classical poem, would not be considered poetry at all.....They (romantics) cannot see that accurate description is a legitimate object of verse. Verse to them always means a bringing in of the emotions that are grouped round the word infinite." (*Speculations*). This is a strong indictment of the subjective element, of the introduction of feeling and emotion in poetry. What Hulme prefers and positively wants is indicated in the following passage: "Poetry is no more nor less than a mosaic of words, so great exactness is required for each one". He seeks "always the hard, definite, personal word," "each word with an image sticking on to it, never as a flat word passed over a board like a counter." Hulme not only wants the concrete object to be evoked in poetry; he goes further and emphasizes the sensuous, even the visual, nature of thought and says, "All emotion (which, as such, he would banish from poetry) depends on real, solid vision or sound. It is physical." This accounts for the Imagist over-emphasis on the concrete and neglect of abstract ideas. Ezra Pound who was converted by Hulme, says, "Do not attempt philosophical or descriptive poetry". "Go in fear of abstractions; that is, use concrete images having the hardness of cut stone." Thus Imagists avoided the diffusiveness of the Georgians, with their loose suggestions, and attempted the presentation of objects at the very moment of their impact on consciousness, with the utmost intensity of immediate effect.

According to Hulme one of the justifying reasons for the com-

position of poetry is the poet's ability to see something unique, something not hitherto seen exactly as he sees it, and to express this unique impression so faithfully as to evoke in the reader exactly the poet's own experience and his particular physical sensation. Every poet, therefore, creates his own language commensurate with his feeling and observation.

According to the strict Imagist theory both the object perceived and the emotion felt by the poet are to be regarded as matters of indifference. It is the accurate perception that is important. This transfixes the poet's whole being for the moment and has to be expressed without any alteration—any embellishment or addition. Perfect faithfulness in the expression of perception can alone call forth original style and poetic diction.

All perception, especially such as elevates the soul to the height necessary for poetic efforts, is of short duration. It is a physical truth that excitement or inspiration cannot last long. Hence a lengthy poem in the Imagist sense is an impossibility. Thus expository, narrative, didactic or descriptive matter has to be excluded from poetry, and only the short poem enshrining momentary impressions has the sanction of the Imagists. They maintain that Homer and Milton had merely written a series of short poems linked by stretches of prose. Their strict view gave place to a more liberal practice in the case of Aldington, Read and Eliot when they were brought in touch with a wider circle of experiences and attempted pretty lengthy pieces.

Imagism is said to be best illustrated in the two lines of Ezra Pound's *In a Station of the Metro* :

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

The explanation of its origin given by Pound himself brings out the nature of Imagist evocation of beauty. Describing how he suddenly saw at La Concorde station, "a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face and then another beautiful woman," he says, "I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening I found suddenly the expression, not in speech but in little splotches of colour. It was just that—a pattern or hardly a pattern if by pattern you mean something with a *repeat* in it."

Poetry embodying accurate visual impression for short durations,

momentary glimpses and pictorial beauties which vanish almost as soon as perceived, is prominent in Hulme's *Autumn* :

A touch of cold in the Autumn night—
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

Above the Dock, in only four lines, snaps the midnight vision of a dock area with its darkish hues, set off by moonlight.

Above the quiet dock in midnight,
Tangled in the tall mast's corded height,
Hangs the moon. What seemed so far away
Is but a child's balloon, forgotten after play.

In *Conversion*, there is excess of the glory of colours and of fragrance. It seems to produce temporary intoxication :—

Light-hearted I walked into the valley wood
In the time of hyacinths,
Till beauty like a scented cloth
Cast over, stifled me. I was bound
Motionless and faint of breath
By loveliness that is her own eunuch.

The poetry of Hilda Doolittle illustrates the scope of what has been called 'pure' Imagist poetry—its possibilities as well as its limitations. In *Evening* it is light that furnishes the central image, while its fading tints are finally swallowed up along with flower and leaf in darkness :—

The light passes
from ridge to ridge,
from flower to flower—
the hypanthias, wide-spread
under the light
grow faint—
the petals reach inward,
the blue tips bend
toward the bluer heart
and the flowers are lost.
The cornel-buds are still white,
but shadows dart



from the cornel-roots—
black creeps from root to root,
each leaf
cuts another leaf on the grass,
shadow seeks shadow,
then both leaf
and leaf-shadow are lost.

In *Sea Rose* outline and form are prominent, and the image betokens undeserved indifference and neglect :—

Rose, harsh rose,
marred and with stint of petals,
meagre flower, thin,
sparse of leaf,

more precious
than a wet rose
single on a stem—
you are caught in the drift.
Stunted, with small leaf,
you are flung on the sand,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind.

Can the spice-rose
drip such acrid fragrance
hardened in a leaf?

Pound's *Concava Vallis*, for the composition of which years of study and poetic discipline were needed, would seem to furnish an extreme example of Imagist literary art :—

The wire-like bands of color involute mount
from my fingers:

I have wrapped the wind round your shoulders
And the molten metal of your shoulders
bends into the turn of the wind,

AOI!

The whirling tissue of light
is woven and grows solid beneath us;
The sea-clear sapphire of air, the sea-dark clarity,
stretches both sea-cliff and ocean.

Here there is undoubtedly colourful and graphic representation,

though the poem is deficient in thought-content. It arrests attention and even exercises a spell on the reader's imagination, though it does not bear keen scrutiny and profound criticism.

The creed of Imagism which valued visual impact in its intense form influenced contemporary literary thought, and its traces are noticeable in the outlook of even prose-writers. They are quite prominent in Osbert Sitwell. In the Preface to his oriental sketch-book *Escape with Me* where he describes his travels in China and Cambodia, he says, "I shall talk of the *look* of the Forbidden City (and try to communicate it to the reader), more than of its history, of which I know little : because its *aspect* must be more familiar to me than to most Europeans.....During the four months in which I lived in this city, I think no single day passed except I wandered at least once in some part of the palace, sometimes only for 20 minutes, sometimes for hours, and I have seen it in winter and summer, under rain and sun and snow. And the Forbidden City is the heart of that metropolis I came to know and love, in similarly watching its *aspect* change through the seasons from winter to full summer " Referring to its houses and their ribbed brown roofs, its lanes and gardens, he says, "When I left, it was a sighing, young summer forest, the gardens were full of blossoms and on the stone paving stood plants, moulded to the fashion of the trees on a Chinese wall-paper, and large earthenware bowls of goggling goldfish, engaged in their eternal skirt-dance of flowing fins and veils, while figures in the thinnest silk gowns fanned themselves beneath the tender quivering shadow of young leaves."

This brings into prominence the obligation of Imagism to oriental countries. The chapter-headings of *Escape with Me* would illustrate this. Some of these are significantly *Golden Bouquet ; Saigon, the Great Exhibition of the West, Life Among the Ruins ; The First Fire-cracker ; Peking : Serenade and Aubade*, etc. Miniature work is beautiful in China and Japan, and in Japanese and Chinese painting the brilliance and contrast of colours are striking. Distinctness of outline and shape is equally noticeable. The arts of China and Japan reflect only the æsthetic tastes of the people, and these equally reveal themselves in Chinese and Japanese poetry. "Some of the best Imagist poems are pieces of less than half a dozen lines, not so much epigrammatic (though classical influence often enters) as pictorial and impressionistic, modelled upon the Japanese *tanka* or the *hokku*"* The fascination which Chinese poetry exercised over

**Trend of Modern Poetry*, p. 84.

English Imagist authors was very considerable, and Ezra Pound's imitations in *Cathay* (1915) and *Lustra* (1917) amply bring out Imagist debts to the colourful poetry of China.

Japanese words have more than one meaning, and hence the *tanka* and the *hokku* derive their special feature and their complexity from "a sort of serious punning." The same effect cannot be obtained in their English imitations. Hence "Imagist imitations of Japanese forms were less densely suggestive, frequently dropping the allegory altogether." The *Oread* of H. D., a typical Imagist poem, is of this kind :

Whirl up sea,
Whirl your pointed pines.
Splash your great pines.
On our rocks.
Hurl your green over us—
Cover us with your pools of fir.

With O. Wilde and Whistler the influence of the exotic aspects of Eastern life had made its way to English literature and art. This is different from the traces of the pictorial art and poetry of China and Japan. James Elroy Flecker's work illustrates this aspect of oriental infiltration. *Hassan* is said to reflect only the characteristics of an æsthetic school. The jewelled speech and the tinsel music such as are noticeable in the work are the marks of the decadents.

But they show that "it is possible for a poet to rebel against the Georgian manner while remaining unsympathetic to Imagism itself." Oriental influence may also be taken to include the influence of the Bible. Many of the devices exploited by the Imagists were derived from the work of the Hebrews. Various forms of parallelism along with repetition of word-order are borrowed from this source :

Tree you are,
Moss you are,
You are violets with wind above them,
A child-so high-you are (Ezra Pound).

Again,

long, long before we came to earth
long, long before we rent our hearts
with this worship, this fear
and this dread.*

**Trend of Modern Poetry*, p. 83.

This reminds one of the diction of the *Book of Job* and *Song of Solomon* :

‘Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is the voice, and thy countenance is comely.’

Richard Aldington was a strict Imagist only for a time. His exuberance would not submit to the rigid discipline of the school, and gradually his individuality asserted itself. There was an inner conflict in him between his sensuous and his imaginative faculty, and even in *Images* (1910-15) Aldington brought in a reflective quality which would not be satisfied with mere sensuous appeal. Again, he made a departure from the Imagist practice of writing short poems depicting momentary impressions of the concrete. In his maturer work Imagism is largely diluted, and the images have more than mere graphic significance. There are however remarkable pictorial qualities with contrast of hues and detailed and accurate imagery in *Epigrams* :

Your mouth is fragrant as an orange-grove
In April, and your lips are hyacinths,
Dark, dew-wet, folded, petalled hyacinths,
Which my tongue pierces like an amorous bee.
Your body is whiter than the moon-white sea,
More white than foam upon a rocky shore,
Whiter than that white goddess born of foam.

Though comparison is suggested with human beauty, this only furnishes the back-ground, and detailed depiction of natural objects is the clear aim of the poet. The same *motif* appears in *Ella* where the poet sings of

the glint of sunlight,
Wind rustling among deep grasses,
Heavy fall of blossom from spring trees,
Fragrance of southern orange-groves,
Splendour of bronze and lofty spread
Of wide arras in dead kings' dwellings,
Dead to the sound of music
That tears the heart with infinite longing.....

Here, too, Imagism is responsible for a lengthy assortment of details of diverse visible and tangible objects—"deep grasses," "spring trees," "orange-groves," "bronze," and "arras"—and of "music," "rustling" etc. Images of form and colour have been combined

with "images of smell and sound". All these have been set in relief by the memory of "dead kings "

Short glimpses of the beauty of the beloved—of her mouth, lips, head etc.,—furnish the theme of *Her Mouth*; but there is no in the poem esoteric suggestion :

I

Her mouth is a crushed flower
That unpetals marvellously
Beneath my lips.

II

The perfume of her flesh stays with me
Dwells in my mouth and nostrils
After she has gone,
So that no flavour of wine or flower
Can conquer it.

III

The crimson that dyes her lips
Dyed mine.....

Aldington has been called a "typical disillusioned romantic," and his love of Imagism in its strict form is a manifestation in poetry of his rebellion against romanticism. Though he was not content with the medieval or ancient world and its outlook, he could not "apply the Imagist technique successfully to a harsh realism complicated by intellectual questioning." His misanthropy and disillusioned attitude suffused his mind with a new hue, and this cast its reflection on his art. He is not quite satisfied with the sense-world ; form, shape and tints of colour do not help the realisation of his ideal. In his Dedication of *The Images of Desire* he asks, "How can I reach you? Though I hold you close, the essential you escapes me ; I cannot pierce to the core of your being." The portraits or pictures he latterly draws lay stress on the inner essence neglected in his previous Imagist work.

I have no lust or care
To sing of Mary;
I praise the quaint sweet air
Of a mortal lady.

She is not clothed in sad
Raiment like Mary,

But in cloth and silk that is glad
And full seemly.

Her eyes are not tear-rimmed
Like those of Mary ;
Only with love are they dimmed
When she kisses me.

(An Old Song)

The essential thing that transcends sight—the supra-sensuous to which the poet turns in his dissatisfaction with the glaring and the obstrusive—is again at the background of the picture in *Epilogue* :

—we who do not drug ourselves with lies
Know, with how deep a pathos, that we have
Only the warmth and beauty of this life
Before the blankness of unending gloom.
Here for a little while we see the sun
And smell the grape-vines on the terraced hills,
And sing and weep, fight, starve and feast, and love
Lips and soft breasts too sweet for innocence.
And in this little glow of mortal life—
Faint as one candle in a large cold room—
We know the clearest light is shed by love

Cecil Day Lewis says, "Images are word-pictures, painted by the poet's imagination in such a way as to appeal to the reader's imagination. They are not generally used simply to describe some object which has caught the poet's attention. What they do is to describe that object as coloured by the poet's emotion when he saw it, or by the mood of the poem as a whole. ...However beautiful an image may be that comes into his head, the poet cannot use it unless it helps to express the emotion of the poem he is writing and unless it can be related with other images in the poem."

Most of the leading Imagists aimed at sharpness of outline associated with statues. Mrs. Aldington succeeded in "crystallizing in a moment of time a beautifully moulded image." The image of a Greek warrior, for example, suggested the following lines :—

I marvelled at your height.
You stood almost level
with the lance-bearers
and so slight.

And I wondered as you clasped
your shoulder-strap
at the strength of your wrist
and the turn of young fingers,
and the lift of your shorn locks,
and the bronze
of your sun-burnt neck.

The height, strength and sturdiness of the veteran warrior are linked together by the emotion of admiration, and successive images are used to express this very effectively. Day Lewis gives an example from a poem by Nash (*In Time of Pestilence*):

Brightness falls from the air,
Queens have died young and fair,
Dust hath closed Helen's eye—
I am sick, I must die.

✓ He says, "Each of the first three lines is an image. First an apparently vague one, which gives us the sad feeling we often get from a sunset (when brightness does in fact fall from the air). The next image is more particular and precise; the poet talks of lovely queens who have died young: the third narrows down the theme still further to Helen, Queen of Troy, the most beautiful woman who ever lived; she too is dead. Running through the three images is the emotion which made the poet write the poem: it comes out in the last line—his fear of dying before his time and his sadness that all lovely things have to perish."

Spiritual despair was at the background of the work of the Sitwells. They lost faith in the existing order and shrank from the external world for which was substituted an artistic world of fancy into which they escaped to avoid heart-ache and frustration. "Bred in the old order, in a social circle the more closely bound because of its growing unease at the approach of an alien life—miners, shopkeepers, villas, slums—Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell (at least) took refuge, when war broke through, in the fantastic manipulation of childhood recollections and warm untroubled images of art."* The world of the Sitwells was a "world of perceptions and sensations of their own, extraordinarily, insultingly different from anybody else's." Their palace of art was full of manifold, crude patterns, glowing tints, swelling draperies and anatomical exaggerations. This escape-world was modern and not medieval as in Spenser's case—a world where there was a jumble

* G. Bullough, *Trend of Modern Poetry*, pp. 125—6.

of Catholicism and Paganism, mechanical devices and fairy-tale life, minute (*e g.*, Chinese) decoration and tropical splash of colour. So far as expression is concerned, there was a mixture of the flowing outline, the baroque style and disjointed phrasing. There were also rhythmical experiments which led nowhere definitely.

Edith's immersion in the eclectic paradise was not always full and complete. She interested herself rarely in narration and still more rarely in abstraction, but very clearly in the play of sensations and in trains of brilliant words. In *Sleeping Beauty* there is a series of embroideries. The imagery is remarkable in the following:

Like cornucopias with ostrich plumes
And great gold fruits, the clouds seem from these glooms.
.....the point lace on the trees
And the pearl-berries of the snow upon dark bushes
freeze.

Variegated eastern life, exotic breath and strong tropical hues appear in *The King of China's Daughter*:

She never would love me
Though I hung my cap and bells upon
Her nutmeg tree.
For oranges and lemons,
The stars in bright blue air,
(I stole them long ago, my dear)
Were dangling there.

The Moon did give me silver pence,
The Sun did give me gold,
And both together softly blew
And made my porridge cold;
But the King of China's daughter
Pretended not to see
When I hung my cap and bells upon
Her nutmeg tree.

Even the satirical touch which is suggested by the incongruous elements does not blind us to the obtrusively visual quality of images in one of Sacheverell Sitwell's poems—*The Farnese Hercules*:

Hercules as husbandman is in the grapes,
He pulls the blue bunches from their roof of leaves
To fill the wicker baskets that the women hold
And they spill them into a pyramid in a space between
the vines:

It towers like a summer wave full of the sun,
Could this be still and frozen for a word to break;

Then into that deep sea of sun and summer rain
 He wades and treads until its fire is loosed ;
 The rocks and hollow hills echo with his laughter,
 Rocks that are the cold bed for goat-foot gods,
 And caves, old mirrors for their sighs and loves.
 The kneeling, fainting cherry trees,
 So deep their green sails and their mouths of fire
 That they burn like a galleon to the water-line,
 Kiss with red lips his hands
 That feel among the apple-trees
 To their branches heavy with those sweets of rain.

The images of Edith Sitwell aim at direct and immediate effect. She is therefore most concerned with precision and emphasis in respect of these, and is not interested in lengthy comparisons or parallelism in interpreting sense-impressions. This is characteristic of her genius which is anti-romantic. Classical similes, *e.g.*, Homeric similes, are lengthy and thought-provoking in complexity. Edith is content with the immediate element of likeness in her images and differs from both classical and romantic poets in respect of this element of their diction.

The difference is, in one sense, the outcome of the creed of Imagism or Impressionism that momentary impressions have to be recorded in poetry without explanatory elaborations or interpretations. "Whereas romantic imagery was in the main expansive, the metaphor or simile enriching and prolonging the thought by opening up new vistas of related emotion, the Sitwellian image, and the imagery of much other modern poetry, is static and limited to one aspect, forbidding any development of the comparison." We have thus "dog-furred strawberry leaves," "Abraham-bearded sun," "rose-shaped heart," "moon-clear orange-blossoms" etc.

The continuation of this extreme diction leads to effects which are sometimes bewildering. *Cubism* and *dadaism* come to exercise their influence on Edith's poetry which at times becomes just a succession of images not linked by any conscious thought. These are no longer symbols of ideas, but "isolated bright counters." There is very little meaning in them, and none is to be sought for. The sequence of incoherent ideas occasionally produces a witty effect, and even this is just incidental to "what is really an arabesque of sensations and memories." The only conscious principle underlying the poems is the rhythm. As the author says, "The poems in

Facade.....are technical experiments—studies in the effect that varying and elaborate patterns of rhymes and assonances and dissonances have upon rhythm” (Preface to *Collected Poems*). Like the cubist painters, Edith latterly tried to abolish organic form and to present simultaneously several sensuous aspects of objects, to mingle planes, dimensions etc. For example, the greyness, the long, rounded, writhing curves, the power, and the roar of waves are suggested by the expression “elephant trunks of the water,” while the chill, repulsive approach of darkness is indicated by “pig-snouted darkness.” Substitution of geometrical for naturalistic forms is illustrated even in an early poem like *Stopping Place* :

In highly varnished noisy heat
As through a lens that does not fit—
The faces jolt in cubes and I
Perceive their odd solidity
And lack of meaning absolute.....

Edith in consequence is responsible for what might be called misassociations. Natural objects are described by her at times in terms of man’s own creations, where images drawn from nature would have better served the purpose of comparison. An element of satire is certainly introduced by such portrayal of elemental things, as, for example, “a muslined cloud,” “the little nacreous breeze that plays with gilt rococo seas” etc. ✕

There is also the confusion of the senses, which is the outcome of the intensity of sensuous co-ordination. Imagery of sound or touch in Sitwell awakens sensations of sight as in “the swinish hairy breasts of the rough wind,” and the image of sight evokes that of sound as in “the morning light whines on the floor.” “Blue wind,” “green airs,” “mellow whining early dew,” light “braying like an ass,” and “pink freezing stars,” may also be mentioned as illustrations. Further illustrations are supplied by *Aubade* where the maid Jane projects her mental qualities on her surroundings. The poem is “suffused with images of wood, hardness, clumsiness and pallor,” because she is a “mindless, wooden-headed creature,” so that the pale morning light creaks like the stairs Jane comes down, the rain falls in lines like “dull blunt wooden stalactites,” flowers are ragged as her “cockscomb hair” and wooden as her mind, the flames of her kitchen fire have the colours of her carrots; the pale milk, too, has a weak mind which is “turned by the sight of her hair.” ✓

This “periwigged style,” as it has been called, makes room for

which was their outcome, suggested the images in one of the poems:—

Still falls the Rain.....

Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded
Side:

He bears in His Heart all wounds,—those of the light
that died,

The last faint spark

In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad
uncomprehending dark.

The wounds of the baited bear,—

The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat
On his helpless flesh...the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain —

Then—O Ile leape up to my God : who pulles me
doun—

See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament :

It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree

Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart

That holds the fires of the world,—dark-smirched

with pain

As Caesar's laurel crown.

Images of colour, touch and taste were still blended in Sacheverell Sitwell's later poems, though his highly decorative style suggested by the miniature work of China and Japan had been dropped :

If you feel for it, pressing back the glossy leaves

The fruit looks cold as if its sullen fire is dying,

So red the ember that you scarcely dare to touch it :

And when your fingers close upon its moonlike rind

Chill must be the flavour like a hidden fountain

Whose waters sparkle springing clear from out the rock.

What are its leaves then, but wings, or the wind?—

Wings to hold the fruit high and cool it in the clouds,

Or wind blowing over those hot rocks that hold the water,

(Orange Tree by Night)

✓ Imagism led to Symbolism, and individual Imagists owed much to Symbolists. Hulme, for example, inspite of his detestation of romanticism and subjective interpretation of appearances, ended, along with his Imagist friends, by embracing an aim which placed them in clear relationship with the Symbolist poets of France. The essential difference between the two schools may be expressed by

saying that compared with the Symbolists, the Imagists were not very subtle in aim and technique. "Direct, shadowless, concrete, they made less of the overtones of language," while the Symbolists attempted to express the interplay of emotion and association beyond the powers of ordinary speech by images of incredible delicacy. The Symbolists' aim was to invent some means of evoking in the reader the precise state of inward being of the poet at a given moment. Their artistic aim was faithfulness to reality ; but through successive waves of disillusion about reality in the 19th century, they were forced to accept momentary states* of being as the sole and absolute reality. Of these they became aware only in proportion as they were unique. But what is unique easily eludes description ; and they tried to find a label for it. It has therefore been said by the Symbolists that they needed to become wizards and speak the language of incantation ; and actually they had to cast a spell over the reader through the use of sound, image and rhythm, and thus to induce in him a state of being identical with that of the writer. Gérard de Nerval, describing his state of mind with reference to the composition of some of his sonnets, said, "I then saw, vaguely drifting into form, plastic images of antiquity, which outlined themselves, became definite, and seemed to represent symbols, of which I only seized the idea with difficulty." Arthur Symons thus comments on the lines : "Nothing could more precisely represent the impression made by these sonnets, in which, for the first time in French, words are used as the ingredients of an evocation, as themselves not merely colour and sound, but symbol. Here are words which create an atmosphere by the actual suggestive quality of their syllables, as, according to the theory of Mallarmé, they should do." (*The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, p. 34). The leader of the Symbolists who was influenced by the romantic tendency to subjectivism—Stephane Mallarmé—thus expresses himself : "Poetry is the language of a state of crisis." Again, "Every soul is a melody which needs to be re-adjusted ; and for that are the flute or viol of each." Symons thus comments : "The word, treated with a kind of adoration, as he says, is so regarded in a magnificent sense, in which it is apprehended as a living thing, itself the vision rather than the reality..... The word chosen as he chooses it, is for him a liberating principle, by which the spirit is extracted from matter ; takes form, perhaps assumes immortality."

*This was directly against the view of extreme Imagists who had no faith in subjectivism and who looked upon the concrete object or sensation as ultimate reality.

Whether a pictorial element is possible in symbolist poetry is a provoking question. If this kind of poetry only suggests, it does not, it may be argued, describe. In that case, there is no room for portrayal. But in the symbol, according to Carlyle, there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the infinite ; the infinite is made to blend itself with the finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there. Again, "In a symbol there is concealment and yet revelation." Symbolist poetry ~~therefore~~, gives a picture which is not the full picture. At the same time, it is not altogether colourless and abstract. As a symbol, it must indicate more than it represents, and its images should suffice to do this. In Mallarmé's poem *Sigh* "a delicate emotion, a figure vaguely divined, a landscape magically evoked, blend in a single effect :"

My soul, calm sister, towards thy brow, whereon
scarcely grieves
An autumn strewn already with its russet leaves,
And towards the wandering sky of thine angelic eyes,
Mounts, as in melancholy gardens may arise
Some faithful fountain sighing whitely towards the blue !
—Towards the blue pale and pure that sad October
knew,
When, in those depths, it mirrored languors infinite,
And agonising leaves upon the waters white,
Windily drifting, traced a furrow cold and dun,
Where, in one long last ray, lingered the yellow sun.

In another poem—*Sea Wind*—Mallarmé has the same delicate art. It is more faithful to nature, but at the same time there is a surprising novelty in its unhesitating touch on actual things, a touch that evokes something beyond the visible :

The flesh is sad, alas ! and all the books are read...
Flight, only flight ! I feel that birds are wild to tread
The floor of unknown foam, and to attain the skies !

Mallarmé looks upon words only as a stepping-stone to something else. Their suggestive or evocative power is more fully utilised by him than by any other writer. "Words, he has realised, are of value only as a notation of the free breath of the spirit : words, therefore, must be employed with an extreme care in their choice and adjustment, in setting them to reflect and chime upon one another ; yet least of all for their own sake, for what they can never, except by suggestion, express" (A. Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, pp. 130-31).

X Symbolism claims Yeats as one of its prominent votaries, and Symonds, in the Dedication of his book to Yeats, calls him "the chief representative" of the Symbolist Movement in England. He recognises the Irish literary movement as one of its expressions. But the early career of Yeats disclosed romantic influences and tendencies. Irish legends and fairy tales attracted him to the past, while his attendance at the School of Art in Dublin shaped his aesthetic tastes. The effect is seen in his juvenile poems and writings published in *The Dublin University Review*. One of these—*The Island of Statues*—shows the influence of the pictorial poetry of Spenser:

Maiden, come forth ; the woods keep watch for thee ;
Within the drowsy blossom hangs the bee ;
'Tis morn : thy sheep are wandering down the vale—
'Tis morn : like old men's eyes the stars are pale,.....

Solitude and loneliness in the midst of beautiful scenery are stressed in the lines

And 'mong the stunted ash-trees' dropping rings,
All flame-like gushing from the hollow stones,
By day and night a lonely fountain sings,
And there to its own heart for ever moans.

Meanwhile Yeats had come in touch with Esoteric Buddhism. This was a reaction to the impress of his father's scepticism on him. *Wanderings of Oisín and other Poems* published in 1889 thus "showed a development from the earliest derivative verses which seemed to mirror nature's details in the backwaters of the stream of English romantic writing, through the handling of quietist theosophical themes, to localised events and folk-lore transformed into a wistful dreamland of the poet's own making." (*W.B. Yeats: Man and Poet*, p. 42).

Here Yeats was a lover of colour and form, and these captivated his imagination to an extent noticeable in Imagists. In the *Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), for example, there are bright tapestries of legendary figures and something like the lavish decoration of the Pre-Raphaelites. The romanticism of the Gaelic past is responsible for the colour-effects. The description of the Land of Youth is remarkable as pictorial poetry :

On ! On ! and now a hornless deer
Passed by us, chased by a phantom hound
All pearly white, save one red ear ;
And now a maiden rode like the wind

With an apple of gold in her tossing hand,
And with quenchless eyes and fluttering hair
A beautiful young man followed behind.

... ..

But now the moon like a white rose shone
In the pale west, and the Sun's rim sank,
And clouds arrayed their rank on rank
About his fading, crimson ball:

The visual image is often very rich in this poem and the contrast of colours is keen in verses like these:

I do not know if days
Or hours passed by, yet hold the morning rays
Shone many times among the glimmering flowers
Wove in her flower-like hair, before dark towers
Rose in the darkness, and the white surf gleamed
About them;.....

Again,

A foaming tide
Whitened afar with surge, fan-formed and wide,
Burst from a great door marred by many a blow
From mace and sword and pole-axe, long ago
When gods and giants warred. We rode between
The seaweed-covered pillars, and the green
And surging phosphorus alone gave light
On our dark pathway, till a countless flight
Of moonlit steps glimmered; and left and right
Dark statues glimmered over the pale tide
Upon dark thrones.

The next poems are full of what has been called romantic nostalgia. Yeats sings of the ancient days of Ireland and of the attractive legendary figures with a wistful suggestiveness. The imagery is reminiscent of Swinburne at times as well as of nature-poets. *Innisfree* and *The Song of Wandering Aengus* are however instances of poetry which throws out other dim suggestions. These lines are characteristic:

And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

... ..

It had become a glimmering girl

With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

(*The Song of Wandering Aengus in The Wind*

Among the Reeds.)

X The removal of the Yeats family to London in 1887 expanded the sympathies and the intellectual horizon of the young poet. He went to see Morris at Kelmscott House and contracted his friendship, but disliked Bernard Shaw, because of his strict logic and the extreme subtlety of his thoughts. Socialist lectures attracted him and oriental mysticism kindled his interest. He met Madame Blavatsky and was admitted as member to the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society which met weekly to study tables of oriental mysticism. This and his acquaintance with MacGregor Mathers intensified Yeats's interest in symbolic systems, though he must have had the mental make-up of a visionary and mystic. The doctrines have been sought to be explained by Yeats: "Every organ of the body has its correspondence in the heavens and the seven principles which made the human soul and body correspond to the seven colours and the seven planets and the notes of the musical scale. We lived in perpetual discussion among the symbols of one of the seven principles which was the indigo extracted from the plant in some practical way. I got with some trouble a bottle of this indigo and got inner members to try experiments fixing their mind upon the bottle and letting it drift. They got impressions of mountainous country and then began to describe the different qualities according to the principles that I might expect from one article that I thought of then."* Yeats at this time also felt interested in magic. Mathers used to study books on magic in the British Museum and later carried on his researches on the continent. He introduced Yeats to a Society of Christian Cabbalists, "The Hermetic Students," known to its members as the Order of the Golden Dawn. Mathers' demonstrations in symbols greatly impressed Yeats: "He gave me a cardboard symbol and I closed my eyes. Sight came slowly, there was not that sudden miracle as if the darkness had been cut with a knife, for that miracle is mostly a woman's privilege, but there rose before me mental images that I could not control: a desert and black Titan raising himself up by his two hands from the middle of a heap of ancient ruins. Mathers explained that I had seen a being of the order of Salamanders,

*W. B. Yeats; *Man and Poet*, p. 52.

Autobiographies, p. 230.

because he had shown me their symbol, but it was not necessary even to show the symbol; it would have been sufficient that he imagined it".

Y The theories and practices of symbolism made a profound impression on the mind of Yeats and eventually influenced his poetic diction and style. The concrete and the sensuous came to have symbolic value for him. Indirect suggestion came to take the place of direct representation in his poetry and even in his prose. Pre-Raphaelitism was receding before symbolism. Yeats gives some idea of the change in his analysis of the progress of contemporary poetic diction. ".....One sees everywhere, instead of the dramatic stories and picturesque moments of an older school, frail and tremulous bodies unfitted for the labour of life, and landscape where subtle rhythms of colour and of form have overcome the clear outline of things as we see them in the labour of life.....I see, indeed, in the arts of every country those faint lights and faint colours and faint outlines and faint energies which many call 'the decadence', and which I, because I believe that the arts lie dreaming of things to come, prefer to call the autumn of the body. An Irish poet whose rhythms are like the cry of a sea-bird in autumn twilight has told its meaning in the line, 'The very sunlight's weary, and it's time to quit the plough.' Its importance is the greater because it comes to us at the moment when we are beginning to be interested in many things which positive science, the interpreter of exterior law, has always denied: communion of mind with mind in thought and without words, foreknowledge in dreams and in visions, and the coming among us of the dead, and of much else. We are, it may be, at a crowning crisis of the world, at the moment when man is about to ascend, with the wealth he has been so long gathering, upon his shoulders, the stairway he has been descending from the first days." (*Essays*, pp. 233-236). The point is further clarified in another passage: "Mr. Symons has written lately on M. Mallarmé's method, and has quoted him as saying that we should 'abolish the pretension, aesthetically an error, despite its dominion over almost all the masterpieces, to enclose within the subtle pages other than—for example—the horror of the forest or the silent thunder in the leaves, not the intense dense wood of the trees' and as desiring to substitute for 'the old lyric afflatus or the enthusiastic personal direction of the phrase' words 'that take light from mutual reflection, like an actual trail of fire over precious stones,' and 'to make an entire word hitherto unknown to the language' 'out of many vocables.' Mr. Symons understands

these and other sentences to mean that poetry will henceforth be a poetry of essences, separated one from another in little and intense poems. I think there will be much poetry of this kind, because of an ever more arduous search for an almost disembodied ecstasy." (*Ideas of Good and Evil*, p. 236).

Along with Yeats's acceptance of the creed of Symbolism went his belief in the existence of a "universal great mind" and a "great memory" which could be "evoked by symbols". He therefore had recourse to imagery and rhythm as something like incantations. He realised the symbolism involved in the current images of leaves, boats, stars, caves and the moon in romantic poetry like Shelley's, and in his own verse the rose, white birds, foam, the wind, became the means of conjuring up "moods rather than sensations." To take one example :

Down by the salley garden my love and I did meet;
She pass'd the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the
tree ;

But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.
In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white
hand.

She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the
weirs ;

But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

At the background of love's infatuation lies partly the dim vista of Celtic Ireland with its primitive romance and weird magic. The salley gardens, the river, the grass on the weir and the lady's snow-white hand are the symbols which evoke them in spite of their contemporary associations.

A symbolism underlies the rose in the mystic Catholic creed. Yeats handled it in his own way in the poems included in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics*, and added to it a new significance suggested by Irish poetic tradition and Celtic Revival. In the 1892 edition he writes by way of explanation : "The rose is a favourite symbol with the Irish poets. It has given a name to more than one poem, both Gaelic and English, and is used, not merely in love poems, but in poems addressed to Ireland, as in De Vere's line 'The little black rose shall be red at last'." A note dated 1925 contains the remark : "I notice upon reading these poems for the first time for several years that the quality symbolised

as *The Rose* differs from Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spenser in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from far". Another explanation is given by Yeats in *Autobiographies* which helps a fuller understanding of the symbol of the Rose: "I thought for a time I could rhyme of love, calling it *The Rose*, because of the Rose's double meaning: of a fisherman who had 'never a crack' in his heart; of an old woman complaining of the idleness of the young, or of some cheerful fiddler, all those things that 'popular poets' write of, but that I must some day—on that day when the gates began to open—become difficult or obscure. With a rhythm that still echoed Morris I prayed to the Red Rose, to Intellectual Beauty.":

Come near, come near, come near, —Ah, leave me still
A little space for the Rose-breath to fill,
Lest I no more hear common things
But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chant a tongue men do not know.

The Rose appeared in some of Yeats's love poems to refer to Maud Gonne also. It therefore symbolises a complex conception blended of Intellectual Beauty, the beauty of the beloved and 'something suffering with man':

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days:
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:

... ..
Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,
I find under the boughs of love and hate,
In all poor foolish things that live a day,
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.
Come near, come near, come near—Ah, leave me still
A little space for the Rose-breath to fill,
Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,
The field mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;
But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know.
Come near; I would, before my time to go,
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

The symbolism in *The White Birds* is delicate, and the evocative powers of the imagery—a combination of the lily and the rose, white birds and the sea-foam—lead to an experience which is midway between joy and sadness :

I would that we were, my beloved, white birds
on the foam of the sea !

We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it
can fade and flee ;

And the flame of the blue star of twilight,
hung low on the rim of the sky,

Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved,
a sadness that may not die.

A weariness comes from those dreamers,
dew-dabbled, the lily and rose ;

Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame
of the meteor that goes,

Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung
low in the fall of the dew :

For I would we were changed to white birds
on the wandering foam : I and you !

Some of the poems of *In the Seven Woods*, e.g., *The Arrow*, *The Old Men* etc., indicate a closer approach to the ideal of symbolism. They are no longer romantic in style and outlook. But though they avoid "common interests, the thoughts of the newspapers, of the market place", and try to deal with "the essences", Yeats's life's experiences are suggestively reflected in them. The agonies of Ireland furnish the themes of these.

In a prose book called *The Vision* composed during 1918-19 Yeats formulated something like his whole view of the universe in an intricately co-ordinated system of symbols. It gave a new assurance to his poetic use of symbols. There was a new orientation of his poetry with the publication of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair* (1933). Yeats had left pure aestheticism behind, and was not lavishly enamoured of form and colour in these as in some of his early poems. He now subjected his art to stern discipline, and it relied more on severity of colour and delicate outline. Also "He turned from books to men". The public activities of his later life gave him the directness he had often lacked. His verse took on a new eloquence and more social themes. His revolutionary activities, especially his membership, as a very young man, of I. R. B. led to

his senatorship in the Irish Free State. Politics came within the range of his poetry and his stature as a man grew fuller. Though there is visual appeal, symbolism now became more manifest. In *Memory of Major Robert Gregory* there is the symbolism of retirement and study—of peace realised after freedom from the bondage of the world:

The tower set on the stream's edge ;
The ford where drinking cattle make a stir
Nightly, and startled by that sound
The water-hen must change her ground ;
He might have been your heartiest welcomer.

(*Collected Poems*, p. 148)

Though *The Tower* had reference to the castle in the Gregory estate which Yeats purchased in 1917, the symbolism had been exercising Yeats's mind as early as in 1900, when he distinguished between the significance of Shelley's towers and caves. "The tower, [✓] important in Maeterlinck, as in Shelley, is, like the sea and rivers and caves with fountains, a very ancient symbol, and would perhaps, as years went by, have grown more important in his poetry. The contrast between it and the cave in *Laon and Cythna* suggests a contrast between the mind looking outward upon men and things and the mind looking inward upon itself which may or may not have been in Shelley's mind, but certainly helps, with one knows not how many other dim meanings, to give the poem mystery and shadow. It is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless meanings beside the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement, into the abundance and depth of nature."

The symbolism in *The Winding Stair* is on a par with that in *The Tower*. Yeats says in his Prefatory Letter to Edmond Dulac: "I think that I was roused to write *Death and Blood and the Moon* by the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, the finest intellect in Irish public life, and, I think I may add, to some extent, my friend." The imagery of the moon, the stair and the tower has been used in the second poem to figure forth the undying ideal which prompted his friend to defy tyrannical power :

Upon the dusty, glittering windows cling,
And seem to cling upon the moonlit skies,
Tortoiseshell butterflies, peacock butterflies,
A couple of night-moths are on the wing.

Is every modern nation like the tower,
Half dead at the top ? No matter what I said,
For wisdom is the property of the dead,
A something incompatible with life; and power,
Like everything that has the stain of blood,
A property of the living ; but no stain
Can come upon the visage of the moon
When it has looked in glory from a cloud.

The short poem on *Symbols* suggests the method of symbolic writing :

A storm-beaten old watch-tower,
A blind hermit rings the hour.
All-destroying sword-blade still
Carried by the wandering fool.
Gold-sewn silk on the sword-blade,
Beauty and fool together laid.

Sometimes Yeats discloses a tendency to epigrams. It indicates a love of brevity, which is helped by his acceptance of symbolism. This is often illustrated in *Words for Music Perhaps* where Crazy Jane is the central figure. This collection of songs of young love is said to reveal "the freeing of the spirit." There is a rich cadence in *A woman young and old* which, with all its symbolism, distinctly evokes pictorial beauty :

If I make the lashes dark
And the eyes more bright
And the lips more scarlet,
Or ask if all be right
From mirror after mirror,
No vanity's displayed :
I'm looking for the face I had
Before the world was made.

Again,

He. Dear, I must be gone
While night shuts the eyes
Of the household spies;
That song announces dawn.

She. No, night's bird and love's
Bids all true lovers rest,
While his loud song reproves
The murderous stealth of day.

He. Daylight already flies
 From mountain crest to creast.
 She. That light is from the moon
 He. That bird
 She. Let him sing on,
 I offer to love's play
 My dark declivities.

T. S. Eliot has already been mentioned, and a passage from *Preludes* has been quoted to illustrate the influence of impressionism. But Eliot soon came under the spell of Ezra Pound to whom was dedicated *The Waste Land* in 1922, and swore allegiance to him in consequence of kinship of artistic purpose and method which he deeply felt. Imagism thus early became the literary creed of Eliot, and accurate and realistic representation was accepted by him as the objective. Eliot obviously shared Hulme's view that it was sincerity of purpose and faithfulness of delineation that counted most in literary work. It made no difference what the subject of a poem was. With Hulme he believed that a good poem might be written on a lady's shoes as much as on the starry heavens. Thus Eliot's images—whatever their nature might be—came to be accurately conceived and faithfully drawn. Mean streets and mean rooms were so painted as to induce a sense of reality. In the organisation of images Eliot displayed remarkable economy and powers of observation :

One thinks of all the hands
 That are raising dingy shades
 In a thousand furnished rooms.

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
 You lay upon your back, and waited ;
 You dozed, and watched the night revealing
 The thousand sordid images
 Of which your soul was constituted ;
 They flickered against the ceiling.

(*Preludes*)

Variety in the combination of images is introduced as Eliot progresses in his literary career. These are associated with the relevant moods which suffuse and tinge them with new hues :

The memory throws up high and dry
 A crowd of twisted things ;
 A twisted branch upon the beach
 Eaten smooth, and polished—

As if the world gave up
The secret of its skeleton,
Stiff and white.

A broken spring in a factory yard,.....

(*Rhapsody on a Windy Night*)

There was soon a break with subjectivism and romanticism. Under the pressure of historical knowledge and scientific progress, later romantic poets were pushed into a reckless individualism and a narrow but intense subjectivism. This at length manifested itself in a desire for self-expression in poetry. As a reaction there ensued a passion in the rebels of the romantic school for being different at all costs. Pound and Eliot with their imagist creed and practice are to be counted amongst these.

Imagism led to Symbolism, as already pointed out. The French School represented by Mallarmè found distinguished followers in England and America. Eliot's symbolism is remarkable. It is the product of his extensive studies in literature, classical and modern, and in philosophy, eastern and western, ancient and contemporary, and of his vast experience of social and cultural life in Europe and America. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, U. S. A., Eliot became a British citizen in 1927 and announced his affiliation with the Anglo-Catholic Church. He had been educated at Harvard, Paris and Oxford. He studied Sanskrit at Harvard and became acquainted with French poetry and French poetic theory later on. His poetical work bears traces of immense intellectual labour—they are really the concentrated deposit from wide and incessant readings and are rich in allusions, quotations and echoes from old writers and thinkers. These are largely responsible for the impression of artificiality produced by Eliot's style.

Eliot has tried to concentrate in his images his vast knowledge, his impression of different strata of contemporary society which in his opinion is grossly vulgar and decadent, and his estimate of creeds, cultures and ideals. He does not indulge in philosophical discussion or analysis, nor does he attempt any elaboration of his own views. His literary output is too small for this. In his short poems therefore he uses images which suggest more than they directly represent. Their significance is much more extensive than their visual appeal. They set in operation trains of thought and ideas which treat the reader's mind to information and feeling that do not appear on the surface of things. The

suggestions and the evocations appear unintelligible and unmeaning and the allusions far-fetched and recondite. As remarked by a critic, "To the uninitiated reader the poem (*The Waste Land*) may seem chaotic. Only those with some knowledge of Dante, Jacobean drama, Buddhism, mythology, and the works of Sir James Frazer, as well as of *From Ritual to Romance*, *can appreciate its movement even with help from the poet's notes." (*The Trend of Modern Poetry*, p. 161)

Ultra-modern ideals are symbolised and satirised in *A Cooking Egg*:

Pipit sat upright in her chair
 Some distance from where I was sitting;
Views of the Oxford Colleges
 Lay on the table, with the knitting.
 Daguerreotypes and silhouettes,
 Her grandfather and great great aunts,
 Supported on the mantelpiece
An Invitation to the Dance.

 But where is the penny world I bought
 To eat with Pipit behind the screen?
 The red-eyed scavengers are creeping
 From Kentish Town and Golder's Green;
 Where are the eagles and the trumpets?
 Buried beneath some snow-deep Alps.
 Over buttered scones and crumpets
 Weeping, weeping multitudes
 Droop in a hundred A. B. C.'s.

Behind the image of "Pipit" there is a suggestion of bourgeois respectability, comfortable, conventional and middle-aged, contrasted with the expectant vitality of childhood. Sandwiched in the middle is the bourgeois heaven, a fulfilment of 20th century dreams of self-aggrandisement, commercial greed, romance and edification, all mixed together. But the egg has lost its freshness; the vision is not inspiring. In the last three lines the staleness seems to spread over the whole society.

The Hippopotamus represents the Church in its decadence, the paraphernalia crushing out spirituality and philanthropic instinct.

*A book on anthropology by Miss Jessie L. Weston shewing the connecting links between the several parts of *The Waste Land*.

The message of the gospel is lost in worldliness and self-satisfaction which have been corrupting the institution for centuries. The lost glory of Venice,—the palmy days of its art, commerce and civilization—is evoked in *Burbank with a Baedeker*, *Bleistein with a Cigar* by means of a few literary references. The contrast between the past and the present is indicated through satiric touches:

A lustreless protrusive eye
Stares from the protozoic slime
At a perspective of Canaletto.
The smoky candle end of time
Declines. On the Rialto once.
The rats are underneath the piles.
The Jew is underneath the lot.
Money is furs. The boatman smiles,
Princess Volupine extends
A meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand
To climb the waterstair.....

To evoke emotion poets have had recourse to nostalgia. Since he is critical, Eliot uses witty statements with a minimum of explicit correlation. The mood is too complex for initial explanation and is the final outcome of the whole poem. The statements are the symbols, which figure forth the mood. In the *Sweeney* poems there is sexual vulgarity in the background. This is hinted at by a concatenation of images. In addition to

The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe.

... ..

The waiter brings in oranges
Bananas figs and hothouse grapes ;.....

Rachel *née* Rabinovitch

Tears at the grapes with murderous paws ;.....

there are the verses at the end, with a different emotional note :

The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud,
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

In Part I of *The Waste Land* (entitled *The Burial of the Dead*)

which emphasizes the spiritual bankruptcy of modern civilisation, the poet begins with a shrinking from fertility in what should be a spring-season, and the symbols of barrenness which follow are carefully chosen with an eye on their evocative power :

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock.....

London is symbolically represented as an 'unreal city' :

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

In Part II Eliot tries to recall the fatal power of woman, and represents two types of modern woman in contrasted literary styles. The picture of a luxurious boudoir is followed by the petulant conversation of its tenant. In Part III the sordidness of urban pleasures is shown along with the agony (comparable to fire) of lust, hatred and infatuation. One of the symbols pressed into service is the river (Thames) of Spenser's *Prothalamion*. In Part V the way of escape from *The Waste Land* is suggested, though there is again a symbolical representation of spiritual poverty :

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water.....

The rain which falls in order to remove barrenness when the prospects seem hopeless, is the symbol of spiritual rebirth through self-surrender, sympathy and self-control.

Of the four poems included in *Four Quartets* it has been observed that they can be clearly and fully understood only by those acquainted with the symbolist technique and with the Christian mysticism of St. John of the Cross, *Theologia Germanica*, etc. One of the problems dealt with in *Burnt Norton* is the paradox of time. Eliot believes in the interpenetration of past, present and future, and writes :

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

The paradox, still more abstruse, of time hypothetical is symbolised in the lines

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

The thrush's call, the box circle, the drained pool—experiences of the past—haunt the present with intimations of some reality "just round the corner."

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

(Burnt Norton)

The age-long life in the village—"the rhythm of the seasons, farming, birth, marriage and death"—is symbolised in *East Coker* by the dancing of the peasants:

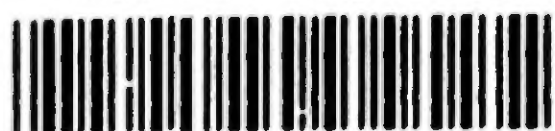
Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest.....

Burnt Norton

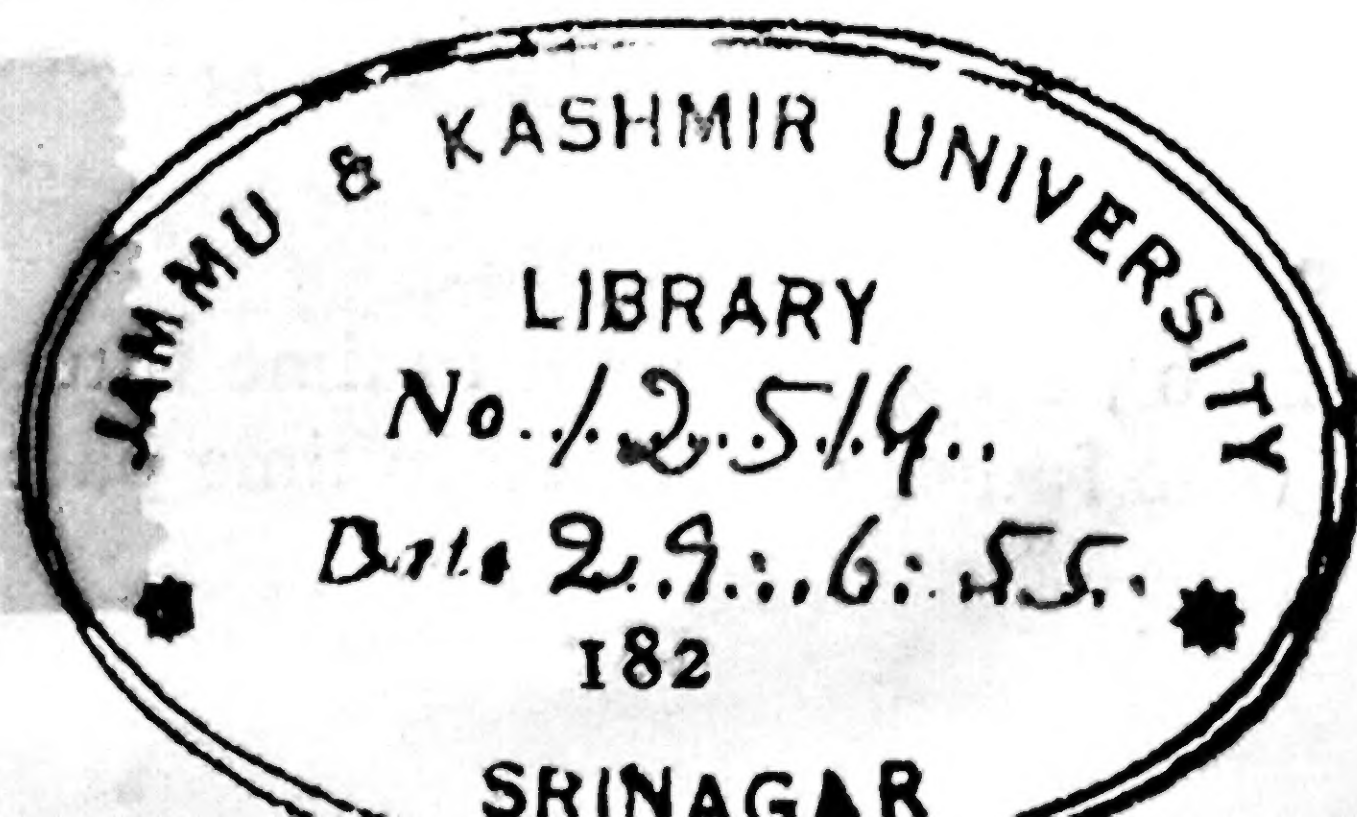
It is needless to multiply instances of symbolism in poetry which attains peculiar complexity in the work of Eliot. It confers on images a manifold significance and may also be said to add indirectly to their pictorial qualities and to their appeal to the reader's imagination.



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



12514



B.S. M.A. (Rev.)
24/11/74

